

BIGFORK NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

~~December 2007~~ Adopted April XX, 2009

Resolution # XXX



“An Uncommon Place”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part	Section	Page(s)
	Table of Contents	i
	Acknowledgements	ii - iii
	Executive Summary	iv - vi
	History & Methodology	vii - ix
	Purpose and Intent	x
	Definitions	x
I	The Bigfork Vision	1
II	Population and Economics	2 - 8
III	Housing	9 - 16
IV	Downtown and the Highway 35 Corridor	17 - 22
V	Land Use and Natural Resources	23 - 49
VI	Local and Social Services	50 - 60
VII	Transportation	61 - 79
VIII	Public Facilities	80 - 84
IX	Implementation Strategy	85 - 87
X	Amendment Process	88
XI	Adoption (Signature Pages)	89 - 90
XII	Amended Adoption (Signature Pages)	91 - 92
XIII	Resolution Flathead County Planning Board	93
	Resolution Board of Commissioners Flathead County	94
Appendix		
A	Housing Assistance	95 - 96
B	Land Use (Specific Input from Landowners)	97 - 100
C	Bigfork Water and Sewer District	101
D	Public Meetings and Workshops	102 - 103
E	Articles & Ads	104 - 113
Supporting Documents		
	Public Comment	
	1993 Bigfork Neighborhood Plan	
	2005 Bigfork Survey	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Compiling a comprehensive, fair-minded, and useable neighborhood plan is an undertaking of Herculean proportions for any community. Of necessity, the process must meld the views and interests of the full spectrum of its citizens while being mindful of the past and modestly prescient about the future. Bigfork, long the beneficiary of a seemingly indomitable community spirit, was not spared the rigors normally associated with this complex planning process. Rather, working together over the course of the past thirty months, “Bigforkians” surveyed, studied, planned, discussed, researched, argued, and contemplated all conceivable factors that needed to be addressed in order to render the very excellent 1993 Neighborhood Plan into an even more up-to-date and relevant document that would be suitable for community planning efforts of the current day and into the future.

We believe we have succeeded and that our success is the product of our collective community. We offer special gratitude to the following direct participants in the process.

Bigfork Steering Committee

2004/2005

Chairman: Doug Averill
Vice Chairman: Denise Lang
Secretary: Sue Hanson
Treasurer: Shelley Gonzales
Member at Large: Katie Brown
Member at Large: Elna Darrow
Past Chairman:

2005/2006

Don Loranger
Buz Meyer
Sue Hanson
Shelley Gonzales
Doug Averill
Elna Darrow

2006/2007

Elna Darrow
Craig D. Wagner
Pat Wagner
Charles Gough
Don Loranger
Gary Ridderhoff

2007/2008

Craig D. Wagner
Elna Darrow
Pat Wagner
Charles Gough
Paul Rana
Bruce Solberg
Don Loranger

Bigfork Survey Teams

Survey: Denise Lang, Carol Venable, Elna Darrow, Bob Hoene, Don Loranger, John Bourquin, Kelly Johns-Sagami

Production: Shelley Gonzales, John Agnew, Brett Thuma

Tally: Sue Hanson and the greatest group of volunteers from the Bigfork community

Analyst: Don Loranger

Bigfork Neighborhood Plan Team Shelley Gonzales-Team Leader

Population and Economics: Shelley Gonzales

Housing: Vince Taylor, Chuck Gough, Jane Leivo

Downtown and Commercial Area: Joyce Mitchell, Paul Mutascio, Jerry Bygren, Cheryl Richmond

Land Use and Natural Resources: Al Johnson, Leslie Budewitz, Brett Thuma, Elna Darrow

Local and Social Services: Gary Ridderhoff, Cheryl Ridderhoff, Charlotte French, Bruce Peachy, Lynn Taylor, Becky Hughes

Transportation: Shelley Gonzales, Sue Hanson

Public Services: Paul Rana, Julie Spencer

Community Presentations

Doug Averill, Sue Hanson, Edd Blackler, Shelley Gonzales, Al Johnson,
Don Loranger, Pat Wagner, Craig Wagner

Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee

Chairman: John Bourquin

Vice-Chairman: Phil Hanson-2006, Shelley Gonzales-2007

Clarice Ryan, Mary Jo Naïve, Paul Guerrant, Darrel Coverdell, Gary Ridderhoff

The Bigfork Steering Committee (BSC) has been blessed by very active and generous participation by a wide array of Bigfork area citizens who are committed to ensuring Bigfork has a bright and illustrious future. Views vary widely on many issues, but converge on how important the continued vitality of Bigfork, Montana is to all of us. Listed below is a list of BSC participants who attended at least one of BSC's regularly scheduled meetings (Thursdays at noon) since this renewed effort began in the spring of 2004.

Adams, Jean	Fisher, Bill	Hotzfield, John	Morgenstern, Beth	Smith, Bob & Paula
Agnew, John	Fisher, Stan & Bev	Hughes, Becky	Moritz, Chris	Smith, Doug
Anderson, Dale & Jean	Flowers, Mayre	Hullger, John	Morrow, Richard & Janet	Smith, Jolene
Angst, Don & Gloria	Fonteyne, Lorne & Karol	Idler, Nancy	Morton, Pam	Snyder, John
Averill, Dan	Forkner, Ham	Incoronato, Ron	Mutascio, Paul	Solberg, Bruce
Averill, Doug	Fox, Tim	Jackson, Jim	Myers, Bill	Spenser, Julie
Barrett, John D.	Frame, David	James, Carol	Naïve, Mary Jo	Stark, Walter & Corrine
Barrington, Reto	French, Charlotte	Janover, Sally	Nedom, Woody & Dani	Stilkey, Neta
Baughman, Don	Franklin, Carmen	Jasmine, Ed & Bobbie	Nelson, John & Vera	Sullivan, Dick & Jean
Beans, Don	Fransor, Carol Ann	Jochim, Dave & Jessica	Newlin, Anita	Sultzter, Duke & Lin
Blackler, Edd	Frizzell, Jim	Jochim, Larry	Niewoeher, Ramona	Sutherland, Gwen
Blair, Joe	Gardner, Warren	Jochim, Richard	Nix, Jerry	Sutherland, Mel & Lisa
Blend, Carron	Gates, Gretchen	Johnson, Al	Norrish, John	Swisher, Susan
Blodgett, John	Gough, Chuck	Johnson, Scott	Norskog, Jan & Jerry	Taylor, Joanne
Blouder, Pam	Gough, Robin	Jones, Rebecca	O'Farrell, Nat	Taylor, Lynn
Bourquin, John	Frame, David	Judge, Susie	Oliver, Clive & Norma	Taylor, Vince & Linda
Brenneman, Joe	French, Charlotte	Keenan, Bob	Owens, Jim & Martha	Thornburg, Jerry
Brooks, William	Franklin, Carmen	Kimball, Bob	Payne, Liz	Thuma, Brett
Brown, Katie & Tom	Fransor, Carol Ann	Klempel, Gina	Peachy, Bruce	Thuma, Joan
Budewitz, Leslie	Frizzell, Jim	Klempel, Lisa	Petersen, Ann	Tice, Emily
Buenz, Mary	Gardner, Warren	Kloock, Joyce	Pointer, Stephanie	Toans, Frank & Hazel
Burggraf, Natalie	Gates, Gretchen	Kluding, John & Jean	Potts-Belt, Denise	Trembath, Rick
Bygren, Jerry	Gough, Chuck	Knauth, Sharon & Dave	Purcell, Dan	Tuebert, Sharla
Callaghan, Mike	Gough, Robin	Knutson, Joanne	Rana, Paul	Varnum, Cy& Jane
Castles, Relda	Gonzales, Jesse	Lang, Denise	Rasmussen, Vince	Venable, Carol
Cassetta, Joe & Julie	Gonzales, Shelley	Lang, John	Reynolds, Dave	Veyna, Pete & Susan
Coats, Kevin & Leslie	Gorsuch, Doris & Bob	Laurendeau, Guy & Toni	Reynolds, Tom	Wagner, Craig & Pat
Colby, JoAn	Groenke, Fritz	Lawson, Paul & Donna	Ridderhoff, Gary &	Wagner, Sally
Connolly, Steve	Guerrant, Paul & Ann	Leander, Peter	Cheryl	Waldenberg, Shirleen &
Couts, Gil & Liz	Habel, Alan	Leivo, Jane	Righetti, John	Sam
Coverdell, Darrel	Hadden, Dave	Lewis, Tom	Ritter, Dan	Walston, Gary & Cathy
Cummings, Joan & Terry	Hagan, Jim & Jean	Loranger, Don & Janet	Riviere, Randy	Watkins, Tedrow & Jill
Crowley, Kim	Hansen, Cherie	Lundberg, Annette	Robertson, Kathy	Welch, Mark
Dalberg, M/M	Hansen, Jim & Liz	McBride, Doug & Pat	Robinson, Marilyn	Wight, Lee & Flo
Danford, Mary	Hanson, Phil & Sue	McCahill, Perry & Charlotte	Ryan, Clarice	Williams, Paul
Darrow, George & Elna	Hanson, Michelle	McDonnell, Kathy	Johns-Sagami, Kelly	Wilson, Dick & Lona
Davies, Carol	Harbor, Cheryl	McElvain, Karen	Sagami, Tony	Winship, Gary
Dean, Joan	Hardman, Harriett	McKnight, Bill & Sarita	Sand, Wayne	Yarbrough, Dennis
Deaton, Doug & Amy	Harvey, Dan	Manning, Dan	Saubert, Jean	Zabaro, Steve
Delaney, Michael	Hatton, Dennis	Maseman, Judy	Saville, Steve	
DeMun, Taylor	Hewitt, Bill & Ann	Meehan, Mike	Schumann, Joni	
Eddington, Jim	Hilde, Dave & Darlene	Meyer, Buz	Schwennessen, Don &	
Elliason, Joan & Kent	Hill, Sam & Isabel	Miller, Russ	Rose	
Erickson, Vic	Hilling, Shelley	Mitchell, Joyce	Sherman, Victoria	
Eslick, Paul	Hoene, Bob & Marge	Mitcheson, Gary & Barb	Skousen, Connie	
Evensen, Dave	Hoffmaster, Richard & Kay	Mogolis, Lyn	Sliter, Ev & Nikki	
Felt, Steve	Hogue, Warren & Verona	Molen, Jerry & Patty	Simmons, Karen & Gary	
Fiero, Pat	Holly, Bob & Cathy	Mordente, Tony	Slezak, Marilyn & John	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document, forged by the labor and intellect of many Bigfork area residents, updates and replaces the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan (BNP) of 1993. The Bigfork Neighborhood Plan was developed in accordance with the Flathead County Growth Plan, Chapter 10, Neighborhood Plans.

The Plan is divided into eleven parts headed by the Bigfork Vision, and is supported by the following substantive sections: Population and Economics, Housing, Downtown & Highway 35 Corridor, Land Use and Natural Resources, Local and Social Services, Transportation, Public Facilities, Implementation Strategy, and Amendment Process. Each section describes existing conditions in the Bigfork Planning Area (a term synonymous with the Bigfork Zoning District), concluding with Goals and Policies designed to provide a road map for moving forward in these specific arenas.

Like their predecessors, the drafters of this plan envision a Bigfork steadfastly meeting the many challenges imposed by growth but doing so in a manner that preserves the rural and pristine character of this very special place as well as nurturing the spirit of neighborliness and volunteerism that characterize the community. The Bigfork Vision is less a statement or slogan, and more an expression of commitment to grow as necessary, but to do so in a manner that preserves and protects existing physical and social characteristics.

The **Population and Economics** section details the reality of a rapidly growing area population and a definitive shift of economic focus from timber to tourism, construction and small, high-tech manufacturing firms. In 1990, Bigfork's population was a modest 3,042 full-time residents, but by 2005 that number was estimated to be 4,355 full-time residents—an increase of 43%. The town has been discovered, and along with discovery has come unprecedented growth and change. Although the economy is expanding, it is heavily weighted toward an expanding retirement community, and has not offered sufficient opportunities for Bigfork youth to settle, earn a living, and raise a family. Concluding Goals and Policies address community involvement, growth management, infrastructure development, and the economic and social needs of our population.

Population pressures are evident in several parts of the **Housing** section. To be sure, the number of housing units has increased to accommodate the current need. To meet the forecasted population increase, there is currently an estimated total of 601 approved single family and condominium building sites, plus approximately 30 single family homes and condominiums built but not yet sold. Additionally, this increased demand pressure is in large measure responsible for the median price of a home rising from \$174,338 in 2001 to \$298,100 in 2005. This increase and demand also foretells a dramatic rise in the cost of home ownership, as taxes and the cost of services rise, as well. However, the economy has not kept pace, and many lower-income families are being priced out of the market, or in some cases, even their own homes.

This section validates the lack of Assisted Living facilities detailed in the Bigfork Survey, and outlines the types of housing and rental units that have been recently constructed, or are in the planning stages. **Appendix A, Housing Assistance**, also details seven such

programs available to residents of the BPA. Goals and Policies found here seek to encourage housing that meets the full spectrum of needs of the Bigfork population, and does so by using development patterns that preserve the essence of the community.

The **Downtown Bigfork and Commercial Area**, fondly known as The Village, has undergone significant change, yet it has been able to maintain its essential character. Comparing 2006 to 1993, one finds more than twice as many real estate offices, service firms and professional offices. Yet, there are also twice as many art galleries, slightly more retail shops, more than twice as many restaurants. In short, there is more of almost everything except parking—a huge problem in the summer. The Highway 35 business corridor has taken up the slack with significant increases of retail stores, service firms, professional organizations, bars and casinos. The section Goals and Policies seeks ways to meet community retail and service needs with facilities that are aesthetically consistent with the Highway 35 corridor or The Village. It seeks a special Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee (BLUAC) subcommittee to work with Flathead County to develop and foster design standards or guidelines for these areas. **For a dramatic comparison, see the cover page photo of Electric Avenue in “The Village” circa 1940, and note there was a parking problem even back then.**

Land Use and Natural Resources is a subject of considerable complexity and controversy embedded within any meaningful community planning effort, for it is here that a proper and agreeable blend of community rights and real property rights must be achieved. As the entire BPA has already been zoned by Flathead County, with input from the BLUAC, this planning effort is less complicated. **Map 1-Bigfork Zoning District** provides a depiction of current zoning as well as desirable growth areas, based upon sound community planning principles, with specific attention being given to the importance of real property rights as well as the location of wildlife areas, aquifers, fault lines, depth of ground water, and other relevant factors. During the public input process of developing this plan, 29 landowners submitted comments with 13 of them suggesting zoning changes to their specific properties. These suggestions have been forwarded to the BLUAC for review and incorporation into the planning/zoning process, as the BLUAC deems appropriate; these suggestions are also included verbatim in **Appendix B**. Plan recommendations in this area include the following:

1. Study adoption of a county-wide impact fee system designed to compel developers to more inclusively share infrastructure impact costs with county-wide taxpayers.
2. Study the formation of a Joint Flathead-Lake County Inter-Local agreement to identify and communicate on issues that affect both jurisdictions.
3. Expand public meeting requirements for requested changes to land use designations within the BPA (currently being explored by the Bigfork Steering Committee).
4. Further research the use of public bonding, conservancy funds, private donations and monies from services organizations as a means to purchase and protect open spaces.
5. Require the BLUAC to use the BNP as its guiding document when making planning and zoning recommendations to Flathead County.
6. Enforce zoning regulations. There is little purpose in having regulations that are not enforced.

Land Use Planning Goals and Policies reflect a concerted attempt to foster and encourage growth in a manner that preserves the character of the area.

Local and Social Services have dominated Bigfork’s history, as a community without a local government that instead relies on volunteerism from a wide variety of individuals and local

organizations to provide for community needs. The BSC, BLUAC (elected), Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork (formerly BDC), Bigfork Sewer and Water District (elected), Bigfork Fire Department (elected), Bigfork Volunteer Ambulance, Bigfork School Board (elected), Bigfork Chamber of Commerce, Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts, and Bigfork Art and Cultural Center work with state and local agencies and service organizations to meet community service needs. As growth increases, continued informal and formal coordination between these and other institutions would become even more important. Goals and Policies for this section seek to solidify and expand these cooperative relationships.

The design, maintenance, and modernization of **Transportation** systems become more important as the BPA and surrounding area continue to grow and prosper. The planning process revealed considerable concern that many county roads needed to be paved and many more required better maintenance. Concern was also expressed that state highways, specifically Hwy 35 and Hwy 209, required better maintenance. Roadway alternatives such as a network of specific use (bike, horse and foot) and multiuse paths are suggested. County and state adoption of a Village sign motif is also listed as an important component of our future.

Public Facilities currently meet community needs. However, emergency services, sewer and water systems, and solid waste disposal sites are all stretched to the limit and must be expanded in a manner that anticipates and meets BPA growth needs. Specific concerns exist that planned expansion and improvements to our wastewater treatment facility are inadequate to meet planned/approved development needs in the next five to seven years. The section Goals and Policies seeks to foster increased attention to this looming challenge.

HISTORY & METHODOLOGY

In 1990, residents of Bigfork, having been long aware of the treasured nature and unique beauty of their community and its environs, formed the BSC to establish a community-wide planning effort. The Bigfork area and Flathead Valley had been “discovered” and it was becoming increasingly apparent that unbridled growth would threaten the area’s charm, rural environment, spectacular vistas, and abundant opportunities to enjoy the surrounding natural beauty and its wildlife--the very features that make Bigfork such a desirable place to live.

In 1993, community efforts culminated in the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan, its approval by the Flathead County Commissioners, and their subsequent formation of the BLUAC. This group was made up of Bigfork representatives charged with administering the Plan and shepherding Bigfork and the Flathead Valley into an inescapable era of unprecedented change and growth.

The Plan and the BLUAC served the community reasonably well until 2004, when it became apparent that valley and community growth demanded a new survey of community attitudes and an updated growth plan. The BSC reformed in 2004 and compiled such a survey. An outgrowth of this effort was the realization that the Bigfork community also includes Lake County residents of Woods Bay, Yellow Bay, Ferndale (south of 209), and Swan Lake. In large measure, Bigfork serves these people as their hometown; the public school portion of their property taxes is paid to Bigfork area schools. Accordingly, although the actual Bigfork Planning Area only includes that land within Flathead County, in February of 2005, the survey was sent to voters and landowners of the greater Bigfork area, including those portions of Lake County mentioned above. (NOTE: The BSC is considering pursuing formation of a joint Bigfork Planning District that would include relevant areas in both Flathead and Lake Counties.)

Survey results published on August 26, 2005, reflected the changing societal dynamics brought to the area by growth. For the next several weeks, the BSC members presented the results to community service groups and held a number of public meetings to both provide survey information and solicit feedback. **(See Appendix D)**

Perhaps most striking, area residents overwhelmingly expressed the view that community planning and zoning were necessary components of coping with the dramatic growth pressures being confronted locally. To reinforce the point, these were the two highest scoring questions on the survey. In terms of desirable community characteristics, the top priorities were preservation of wildlife, maintenance of Bigfork’s charm and character, and access to the surrounding scenic lands, lakes, streams, and forests. So too, it also became apparent that the population was aging—in small measure due to the inexorable march of time, but more dramatically, because of the large retiree component of incoming residents. As a result, the survey results reflect a significant concern with the availability of retirement services and housing for a growing population of seniors.

Survey results cannot be characterized as anti-growth. Indeed, by their responses, it is apparent that participants embrace growth as long as it is done in a manner that preserves the character of the Bigfork area, and encourages a continuance of the Bigfork social legacy of neighborliness and community participation.

Once the survey was analyzed and presented to the public for comment, the BSC formed a subordinate planning team headed up by Shelley Gonzales and comprised of citizen volunteers who had participated in earlier aspects of this community project. Seven subcommittees were established: Population/Economics, Housing; Downtown/Hwy 35 Corridor, Land Use and Natural Resources, Local/Social Services, Transportation, Public Facilities. Using the survey results, written and verbal inputs from a number of public meetings (**Appendix D**), and considerable research from private and public sources were utilized as the foundation for writing the Plan. A macro approach for forecasting the future of Bigfork was implemented utilizing the best available data from sources such as the U.S. Census (Fact Finder website, Flathead County Census Tract 13, Block Groups 3 through 6), Flathead County's Planning and Zoning, GIS (mapping), and Environmental Health (Sanitation) departments, and Bigfork Water and Sewer Department. Additionally, the identification of available land for future residential and commercial expansion within the Bigfork Zoning District was physically inventoried by volunteers and planners from the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department. While a micro analysis for forecasting the future expansion areas of Bigfork and the identification and tallying of available acreage for development could have been performed by the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department, such a thorough analysis would have taken an additional year or more to perform.

The development team created the new and revised Bigfork Neighborhood Plan between November 2005 and August 2006, when a draft was completed. The draft plan was then presented to the entire BSC in September 2006, and presented to the BLUAC for review and approval. The approved Plan was submitted to the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department on March 6, 2007.

The Planning Department presented its opinions regarding possible additions or amendments to the Plan on September 13, 2007 at a public workshop. A total of five public workshops were held between September 13 and October 18, 2007 to review and consider the recommendations of the Planning Department. All of the recommendations were considered and a majority of those were adopted based on the opinions of the Planning Department and additional public input at the workshops. A comprehensive future land use map was created based on projected residential and commercial growth in the BPA through 2025, and added to the Plan. A workshop on December 5, 2007 was held to provide the community with further input on the future land use map; 14 members of the community were present. On December 13, 2007, the BSC adopted the amended draft of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan and forwarded it onto BLUAC for their consideration. On December 27, 2007, BLUAC adopted the amended draft of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan. On January 3, 2008 the final draft of Plan was posted on the BSC website and a copy was made available for review at the UPS store in Bigfork. A 30 day public comment period commenced.

On February 7, 2008, pursuant to the requirement in the Flathead County Growth Policy, a final, main public workshop was held by the BSC and comment was taken on the final Plan draft, inclusive of the final draft of the Future Land Use Map. All those property owners whose land was proposed for change of land use, as well as land owners within 150 feet of those properties were mailed a notice of the hearing and a draft of the future land use map. Notice of the meeting was also published in the Bigfork Eagle and the Daily Interlake. The workshop was attended by 45 members of the community. There were 12 general comments made or questions asked of the Planning Department representative ranging from trash on the roads to concerns about the 100 year flood plain; all verbal comments were addressed. There was one favorable written

comment made on the future land use map and one on the Plan in general. There was only a single objection to the Plan. On February 14, 2008, a joint BSC and BLUAC public workshop was held to review all comments from the February 7, 2008 public workshop. A single word change was made to the draft. This was the 170th public meeting on the Plan. BSC voted unanimously to adopt the amended Bigfork Neighborhood Plan and to forward it to BLUAC, who at the same public meeting, voted unanimously to forward the draft Plan to Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department for processing and consideration by the Flathead County Planning Board. The Plan was received by the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department on March 13, 2008.

On April 9, 2008, the Bigfork Steering Committee presented the Plan to the Planning Board for approval. Considerable public comment from outside the Bigfork community was taken. The Planning Board motioned that a workshop for the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan be held on June 25, 2008, to address the issues raised by the public. BSC and BLUAC held a joint public workshop on June 18, 2008, in order to prepare for the workshop with the Planning Board. During this time the Montana Supreme Court ruled that neighborhood plans could be more restrictive than county zoning regulations. The Planning Department moved to strike from Section 1.04 of the Flathead County Zoning Regulations provision 1.04.020 which stated that neighborhood plans could be more restrictive. At the time of the June 25, 2008 workshop, the County Commissioners had not yet voted on the text amendment, therefore the purpose of the workshop was mutually determined to be without purpose. Subsequent to the approval of the text amendment by the County Commissioners, a joint public workshop with BSC, BLUAC, and the Planning Board was held on December 11, 2008. Recommendations from the Planning Department to revise various sections of the Plan were received. Additional revisions to the Plan and to the Future Land Use Map were implemented and approved by BSC and BLUAC on January 5, 2009.

PURPOSE AND INTENT

It is understood that the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan, *an addenda to the Flathead County Growth Policy*, is not a regulatory document and does not confer any authority to regulate its provisions. The goals, policies, and text included herein should be considered as a detailed description of desired land use in the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan Area (BNPA). The Plan should also be used as guidance in adopting zoning ordinances and resolutions that would regulate land use in the BNPA.

DEFINITIONS

BLUAC: Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee

BNP: Bigfork Neighborhood Plan

BSC: Bigfork Steering Committee

BWSD: Bigfork Water & Sewer District

CFBB: Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork (formerly Bigfork Development Corp. BDC)

DEVELOPMENT: The physical extension and/or construction of land uses. Development activities include: subdivision of land; construction or alteration of structures, roads, utilities, and other facilities; gravel resource extraction; grading; deposit of refuse, debris, or fill materials; and clearing of natural vegetative cover (with the exception of ongoing agricultural/silvicultural operations). Routine repair and maintenance activities are exempted.

MPDES: Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

PER: Preliminary Engineering Report

PROFESSIONALS: Doctors, Dentists, Lawyers and Architects, as an example.

SERVICES: Certified Public Accountants, Title Companies, Travel Agencies, Insurance Agencies, Auto Repair Shops, Beauty Salons, and similar businesses.

SHALL: Use of the word *shall* is to be construed as creating a mandatory provision that would be implemented by a regulatory agency.

SHOULD: Use of the word *should* is to be construed as creating a rebuttable presumption in favor of the stated goal or policy. A rebuttable presumption may be overcome by the presentation of sufficient evidence contrary to the stated goal or policy, as determined by the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee.

SRF: State Revolving Fund

STAG: State and Tribal Grant

TSEP: Treasure State Endowment Program

WRDA: Water Resources Development Act

WWTF: Wastewater Treatment Facility

PART I - THE BIGFORK VISION

“An Uncommon Place”

The Bigfork Planning Area (BPA), also referred to as the Bigfork Planning and Zoning District, encompasses a fifty-one square mile area with unique and natural surroundings, as well as an exceptional cultural climate. The citizens believe that this combination of natural and cultural amenities needs to be preserved, protected and enhanced. The neighborliness and community enthusiasm must be nurtured as part of that social legacy. We believe that growth and development within the BPA should be complemented by the natural and cultural heritage that makes Bigfork unique. Development of human and natural resources should reflect and sustain the integrity of the community. The Bigfork Neighborhood Plan is an extension of the Flathead County Growth Policy and also strives to adhere to The Seven Elements of the Public’s Vision as stated on page one of the Flathead County Growth Policy.

Successful Communities ...

- Build land use planning around a vision of the community’s potential.
- Build land use planning around assets that make the community distinctive.
- Support ecological, economic and aesthetic concerns.
- Secure quality development that provides for all economic levels.
- Respect the rights of individual property owners.
- Are sustained by individuals with the tenacity to spearhead conscientious land use and conservation planning efforts.

Goals for Growth

1. **Marshal and integrate** diverse resources – county, state, federal, and private – to develop and improve community infrastructure, such as water, sewer, roads, schools, and community facilities and institutions.
2. **Utilize** the talents, energy, creativity and experience that exist within the community to work toward agreed-on goals.
3. **Identify and capitalize on** the unique attributes of the area, including the history, heritage, landscape, structures, sites, and livelihoods to maintain a vibrant community.
4. **Create** an amenity oasis that provides and attracts desired services while complementing the natural surroundings.
5. **Encourage** sustainable enterprises based on renewable resources and protect those resources for the long-term.
6. **Expand** contacts and collaboration throughout the region, state, and nation. Small communities can benefit by keeping wide horizons.
7. **Promote** quality development and protection of natural surroundings at all economic levels.

PART II - POPULATION AND ECONOMICS

Summary - Conditions and Trends

The rapid growth and aging of the population within the BPA will create increased resource demands on the Bigfork community and Flathead County. An aging population requires more costly services such as medical and assisted care. In 2000, 50% of the BPA population was 45 years and older. This number has certainly increased with the influx of retirees during the past five years. Static school enrollment indicates that young families are not moving into the BPA at the same rate as retirees. This topic is further discussed in Part VI - Local and Social Services.

The economic base is becoming broader, as evidenced by the increasing reliance on professional, retail, and financial services, as well as the arts and culture. Though subject to seasonal vagaries, the hospitality industry and other local economic sectors provide a broad range of income to local citizens. Personal income is higher than the county average due to an acceleration influx of higher income retirees and real estate activities. Poverty is well below the county average. An indication that the population of the BPA is aging is that 32% of the population is receiving Social Security income and 24% is receiving other retirement income. Some of these recipients could be one and the same.

Population

In developing the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan, a projection of the future growth of the BPA and the future housing and economic needs within the BPA was required. U.S. Census Block Groups 3 through 6 in Flathead County Census Tract 13 was found to very closely represent the boundary of the BPA. This is the best available data and the closest representation of the BPA for census related data presented throughout this document.

The 2000 U.S. Census reported that the population within the BPA was 3,955 full-time residents up 30% from the 1990 census population of 3,042, which represents a 3% average annual growth rate over the ten year period.

- Using the extrapolation method, Flathead County estimated that the BPA population in 2005 reached 4,355 full-time residents, a 10% growth rate over the 2000 census population, which represents a 2% average annual growth rate over the five year period.
- The influx of new residents is considered to be largely the new retired and, to a lesser degree, owners of second homes. (From Montana Real Estate Board.)
- There is no reliable historical data for the number of part-time residents in the BPA. However, in 2000 there were 533 seasonal homes in the BPA and an estimated 599 seasonal homes in 2005, which could represent upwards of 1,500 additional people periodically residing in the BPA requiring goods and services of the community. This calculation is based upon 2.45 persons per household from the U.S. Census.

The general characteristics of the population reveal that in 2000, the median age was 45 years of age up from 39 years of age in 1990. Eighteen percent of the population segment is over 65 years of age, well above the national average of 12.4%.

- With the aging of the existing population and an influx of retirees, the population of the

BPA will require increased services such as medical care, assisted living, and public transportation.

Future population projections for the BPA through 2025, have been provided by Flathead County using the extrapolation method, and are presented in five year incremental estimates. The countywide growth rate of two percent per annum in each five year incremental projection was determined to be so close to the average annual BPA growth rate of three percent per year between 1990 and 2000, that it could be accepted for analysis purposes. It is recognized that these estimates could potentially be high or low. The projected population for the BPA is as follows:

<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>
4,795	5,279	5,813	6,400

Recognizing the potential for a population increase of 2,045 people between 2005 and 2025, a growth rate of 47 percent, growth in both the commercial and residential sectors of the BPA will be crucial to maintain the vitality of the community. Managing commercial and residential growth and diversity while preserving the rural character of Bigfork is an important theme promoted throughout this Plan and which is attributed to the results of the Bigfork Survey.

Economics

Specific economic data for the BPA is not available, as all economic data is gathered and presented at the county level. However, tourism, the arts and recreation historically have been the basis of the BPA economy. Agriculture and timber account for a declining segment of the economic sector as agriculture and timber land give way to commercial and residential development.

- The future economic viability of the BPA relies on maintaining the quality of our natural resources. (Bigfork Survey)
- Attracting future tourism dollars will require improvements in lodging facilities in the BPA to keep a larger share of visitor dollars. (Glacier Country Tourism)
- Reliance on tourism is subject to economic cycles and a protracted downturn could significantly impact the financial viability of the community.
- The seasonality of tourism creates periods of weak economic performance in the BPA, as do weather, and natural disasters such as fires.

Employment

The 2000 U.S. Census reported that the employed population within the BPA, defined as 16 years and older, totaled 1,751 people.

- Construction accounted for 14.9% of the population.
- Education, health and social services accounted for 14.8% of the population.
- Retail trade accounted for 13% of the employed population.
- Art, entertainment, recreation, and food services accounted for 12.8 % of the employment population.
- Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing accounted for 8.6% of the population.
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining accounted for 6% of the population.

In Flathead County in 2005, 47% of tourist dollars were spent in retail businesses and restaurants. (Glacier Country Tourism) Given the seasonal nature of tourism in Flathead County, in the BPA the two largest employment segments above are vulnerable to unemployment. Additionally, a small segment of the employment population chooses to work seasonally. Accordingly, the need for seasonal assistance rises especially during the winter months. (Bigfork Food Pantry)

The 2000 U.S. Census also states that 30.6% of the BPA population over 25 years of age is college-educated, with a bachelor's degree or higher, as compared to 22.4% for Flathead County.

Economic Growth

The 2000 U. S. Census reported the BPA median household income, in 1999 dollars, was \$39,411. *Household income is defined as income earned by a single occupant or occupants not related.*

- 35.7% of households earned less than \$10,000 to \$24,999 annually.
- 24.1% of households earned between \$25-44,999 annually.
- 25.5% of households earned between \$45-74,999 annually.
- 14.7% of households earned over \$75,000 annually.

The median family income in 1999 dollars was \$46,133. *Family income is defined as income earned by individuals related by marriage and birth and living together.*

- 24.4% of households earned less than \$10,000 to \$24,999 annually.
- 26.2% of households earned between \$25-44,999 annually.
- 30.9% of households earned between \$45-74,999 annually.
- 18.5% of households earned over \$75,000 annually.

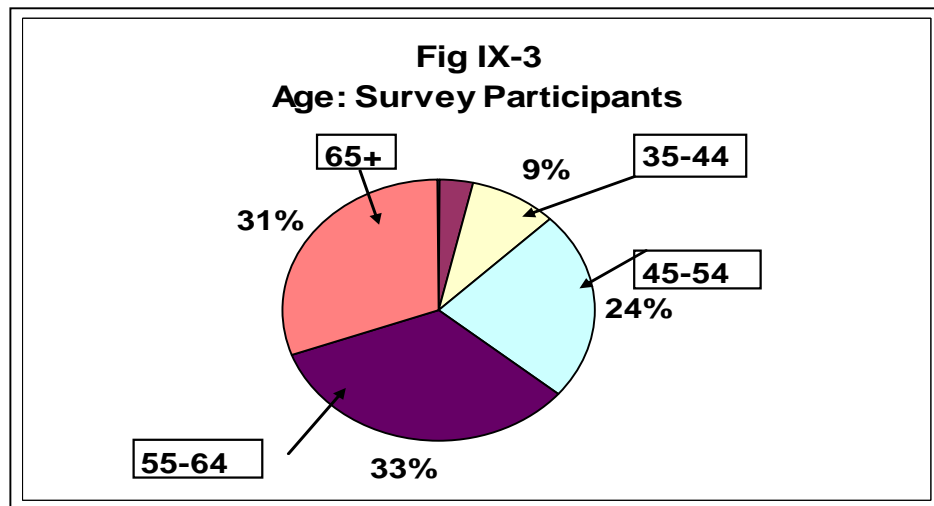
The higher percentage of median family income reflects the likelihood that there are multiple income sources contributing. Per capita income within the BPA was \$19,019. Thirty-two percent of the population receives Social Security income and 24% receives other retirement income. Some of the recipients could be one and the same.

Compared to the Flathead County U.S. Census statistics for 2000, the income levels of Bigfork households and families are above the average for the county. For example, the median family income at the county level was \$40,702 and only 27% of the county median family income was between \$45-74,999. Also only 26% of the county population receives Social Security income and 16% receives other retirement income.

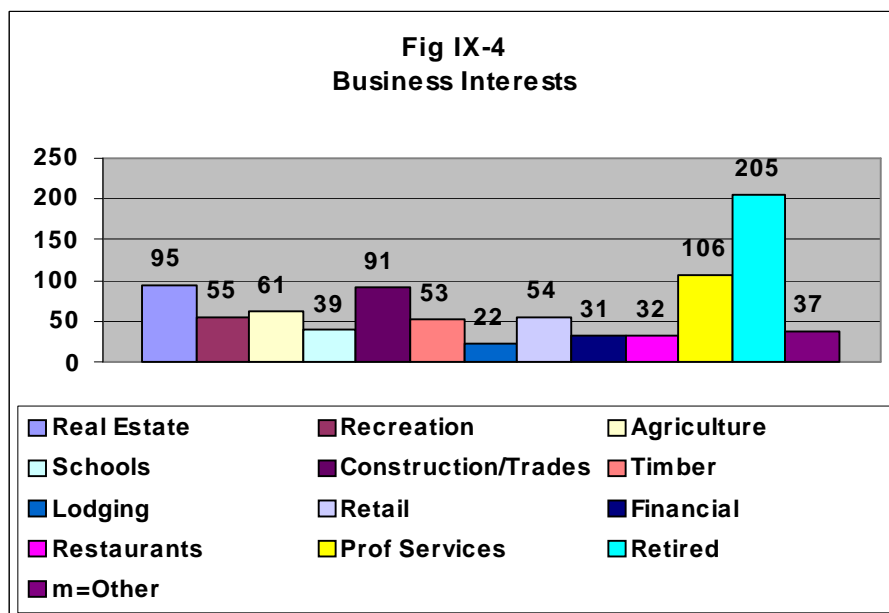
Poverty in the BPA in 2000 consisted of 165 family and non-family households living below the poverty level. Bigfork Food Pantry reported that households receiving assistance has declined from a high of 24 households in 2000, to a low of 15 households in 2002, and to a 2005 level of 19 households. The Bigfork Food Pantry provides assistance to households whose income levels are 150% of the federal poverty guidelines. (Federal poverty guidelines: income for a family of four is \$19,350 annually.)

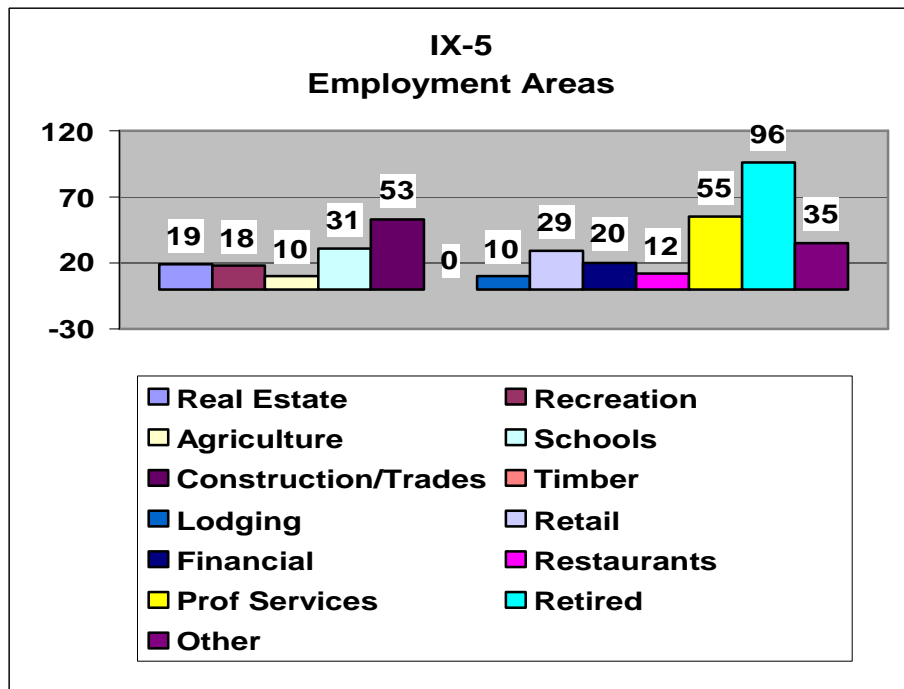
Extract from BPA 2005 Survey Analysis

Age, being a fundamental prism through which one's views are formed and filtered, offers some essential background information to the survey results. As a group, survey respondents were comparatively senior as shown in Figure IX-3, below. Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents were 65-years old or more, and sixty-four percent (64%) were over age fifty-five.

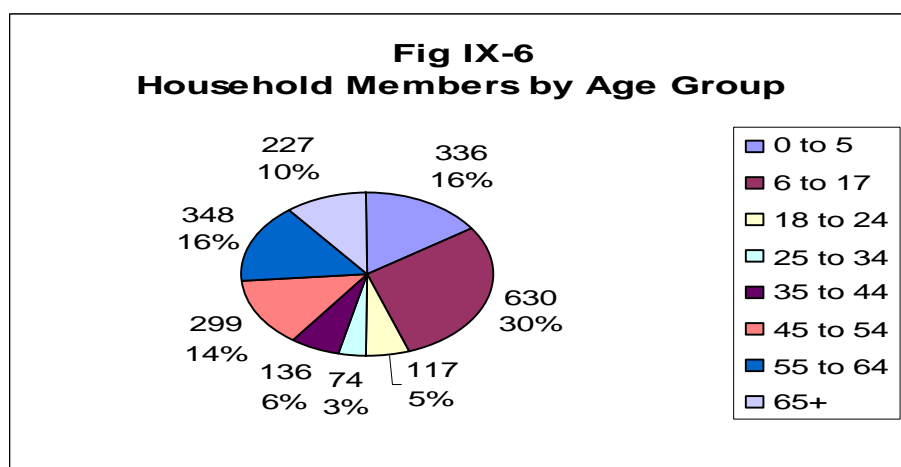


These age data are more fully understandable when compared to the Business Interests and Employment Area information depicted on Figures IX-4 and IX-5, respectively. By almost a factor of two, “Retired” is the largest category in both charts. Professional Services, Real Estate, and Construction/Trades were the next most populated categories under Business Interests (Figure IX-4). Similarly, Professional Services and Construction/Trades (Figure IX-5) were the most populated Employment Areas.





However, the age component is more complex than the data depicted in these two charts. Per Figure IX-6, of the 2,167 area household members of survey participants, forty-six percent (46%) were age 17 or under. Moreover, when interpolating these data on the basis of the number of persons in each specific year group, the 0 to 5 Age Group has on average 67 individuals in each age year while the 25 to 34 Age Group and the 35 to 44 Age Group only average 7 and 14 persons, respectively, in each age year. Thus, while the Bigfork area has a large and growing number of retired individuals, it also has youthful population advancing through life's stages. Note that the age year regression is far from linear. Rather, it is heavy at both ends suggesting that while area residents have determined Bigfork is a great place to raise a family or retire, it is also possible to fortify the popular conclusion that necessity forces a number of our youth to seek their financial security elsewhere.



Taken together, the data demonstrate that area longevity and seniority, coupled with business/employment interests, are reflective of a dynamic community that diverse groups have found attractive. These trends, coupled with the well-documented and fast approaching baby-boomer retirement bubble, make the community planning processes that serve as a backdrop for this survey absolutely essential elements of Bigfork's future. Just as important, we must continue to recognize that we are a diverse community and the ability to meet the needs of the full spectrum of our community must remain an essential planning element of our future.

Population and Economics Goals and Policies

Goal Statement:

The Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee (BLUAC) and the Bigfork Steering Committee (BSC) will strive to work with Flathead County to guide population growth and development in ways that protect the area's rural character and natural resources, yet attract and maintain economic diversity.

Goal

G.1 Promote community involvement in decisions related to economic growth opportunities, commercial, and residential development.

Policy

P.1.1 Encourage input from residents and local organizations such as the BSC, The Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork, and other community organizations, to ensure that input is considered by the BLUAC and Flathead County.

Goal

G.2 Support growth and development in the BPA in a way that protects the character of the area and its natural resources.

Policy

P.2.1 Encourage open space conservation to maintain the rural character of the BPA and protect resource quality and wildlife habitat.

P.2.2 Alternative economic development should be supported but not to the detriment of the quiet enjoyment of the residents within the BPA.

Goal

G.3 Infrastructure must be sufficiently developed to support population growth and economic development.

Policy

P.3.1 Require all new development to pay for and carry its share of costs through impact fees or other methods, for infrastructure such as, but not limited to, public and community water and sewer, school expansion, additional transportation, road requirements, and other needs consistent with Flathead County impact fee regulations, *should they be established*.

P.3.2 Request Flathead County to adopt an Impact Fee Advisory Committee and develop an impact fee schedule.

Goal

G.4 Provide for the aging population in the BPA.

Policy

P.4.1 Encourage, as needed, the establishment of senior citizen facilities.

Goal

G.5 Promote population diversity in the BPA.

Policy

P.5.1 Support an economy that would encourage recreational opportunities, an excellent school system, and an environment that encourages young adults and families to reside in the BPA.

PART III - HOUSING

Summary - Conditions and Trends

Overall, the BPA needs mixed housing types to accommodate anticipated growth as well as accommodate the varying price and cost demands and the requirements of different age groups.

Housing costs in northwestern Montana are generally higher than in other parts of the state. Alternatives for local renters are primarily traditional single-family residences with relatively few multi-family units available.

Median sales prices are higher in Bigfork than in Flathead County as a whole (\$298,100 compared to \$214,450). A major affordability issue is the difficulty for first-time home buyers to purchase homes due to relatively high housing costs and inadequate assistance programs.

Rapid growth can result in housing shortages for special needs groups and inadequate assistance programs for low-income segments.

Housing

Bigfork Population

<u>1990 census</u>	<u>2000 census</u>	<u>2005 Estimate</u>
3,042	3,995	4,355

The population for 2005 is estimated at 4,355 based on estimates from Flathead County. (See Part II-Population and Economics for the methodology in calculating population growth.) In 1990, the average household size was 2.57 people and in 2000 it was 2.45 people per owner occupied dwelling and approximately the same for renter occupied dwellings.

Housing Units

Type of Housing Units	<u>1990 Census</u>		<u>2000 Census</u>		<u>2005 Estimate</u>	
Occupied Housing Units						
(Owner or Rental)	1,159	72.5%	1,650	70.9%	1,795	70.9%
Vacant for rent, for sale or sold	108	6.8%	133	5.7%	146	5.7%
Vacant-Seasonal	331	20.7%	545	23.4%	599	23.4%

The assumptions used for the 2005 estimate kept the mix identified in the 2000 U.S. Census, plus the county's 10% per five year period growth estimate, and applied 2.45 people per occupied housing units.

Housing Starts

Bigfork Sewer Hookup

<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>Septic Permits</u> <u>2001-2005</u>
28	22	119	128	141	150

Housing starts since the 2000 census totaled 588 units with the majority of these being single family residences constructed in the past three years. These units appear to have accommodated growth between 2000 and 2005 when the population increased by an estimated

400 full-time residents. There is no data available to determine how many of these units were constructed as speculative residential dwellings and how many remain unoccupied, or how many residential dwellings are truly seasonally occupied.

Median Housing Prices

As demonstrated in the table below, the median price of a BPA home has increased 72.5% since 2000. During this same period, there has also been a dramatic increase in the number of units sold. (Information provided by the Northwest Montana Association of Realtors.)

<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
116 units	121 units	134 units	132 units	185 units	191 units
\$172,800	\$174,338	\$190,250	\$229,000	\$256,250	\$298,100

Rental Units

Long-term rental units are limited in the BPA. Information gathered from rental companies that manage properties in Bigfork indicates availability of 75 to 80 units. The number of individual rental properties not under professional management has not been determined. Only one eight-unit multi-family facility was built between 2000 and 2005, but in 2006 there have been new applications for additional units in the Crestview subdivision.

The number of individual rental properties not under professional management has not been determined.

Group Quarters

Bigfork has a nursing home with a capacity of about 80 beds. Presently, this facility has an occupancy rate of 70%.

Bigfork does not have an assisted living facility.

Low and Moderate Income Properties

Little John Apartments has 32 units with a 95% occupancy rate, and a limited waiting list. Rental assistance through the Rural Development Program is available through HUD, Section 8.

Landmark Senior Apartments consists of 16 units with a 100% occupancy rate, and there is a limited waiting list. These apartments are rent-subsidized through HUD section 8 under the Rural Economic Development Program for clients 62 years and older or for those who are disabled.

Housing Assistance Programs

Details of seven Housing Assistance Programs available in the BPA are included in **Appendix A**.

Future Growth Potential Identified in Bigfork

Information has been obtained from the Flathead County Planning Department and by on-site visits to identify those development projects that have received preliminary and/or final approval by the Flathead County Commissioners.

In 2006, a variety of condominiums and townhouses have been completed in the Bigfork Village area and currently there are several new multifamily residential applications in the Crestview area pending with the appropriate boards. Additionally, eight new units are being added to the Crestview Senior Housing complex.

In order to determine the current availability of housing for the estimated future population growth in the BPA, an inventory of identifiable subdivisions and homes constructed but vacant was performed. Owner occupied homes for sale were not included in the inventory as the availability of these properties are subject to the vagaries of property owners and changing market conditions.

Within the BPA there are approximately 474 single family and duplex/condominium lots available for development. There are also approximately 30 homes and condominiums built but not yet sold. Additionally, the Saddlehorn project has approximately 127 lots currently available for development; however, these lots most likely will serve the seasonal market and the occupants will not add to the full time population of the BPA.

With the estimated population increase of 2,045 between 2005 and 2025, and calculating 2.45 residents per household from the 2000 U.S. Census, there will be a need for 835 additional residential dwellings in the BPA. With the current availability of 504 residential lots and dwellings, there could be a housing shortage of approximately 331 dwelling units by 2025.

When the results of the Bigfork Survey were presented to the community, attendees were invited to express their preferences for the future use of their property. Utilizing the input of land owners in Appendix B, locations for future residential development were identified to meet the projected dwelling shortfall. These parcels are generally designated agricultural and the owner's desire for rezoning range from R-1, one dwelling per acre, to R-4, four dwellings per acre. The parcels are located areas of existing higher density development (Chapman Hill Road) or where there is very limited residential development (Highways 35/83/82). All parcels are located near the existing water and sewer lines of Bigfork Water and Sewer.

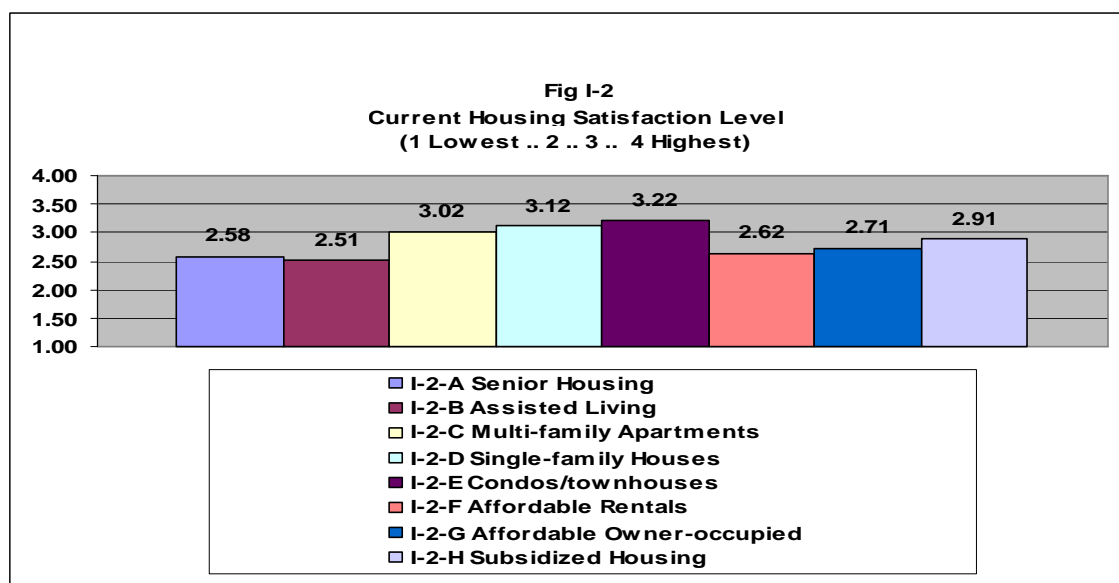
To determine the potential build out of these parcels the acreage was totaled, reduced by 30% to account for infrastructure (a number typically used by developers), and R-1 and R-2 zoning applied for Suburban Residential designation. Under R-1 zoning 120 dwelling units would be created and with R-2 zoning 240 dwelling units would be created. For this analysis an average number was determined at 180 dwelling units. Additionally, a recent zone change on agricultural land north of Highway 35/83/82 to SAG-5 would create an additional 15 dwelling units. Therefore, it appears that for projection purposes additional areas for residential development will be required to meet the shortfall of 136 dwelling units. This shortfall also can be met by infill opportunities in the Urban Residential designated areas and identifying other opportunities in existing undeveloped Suburban Residential designated areas such as in

Peaceful Acres, southern Chapman Hill area, northern Bigfork Stage area, and within the Streeter's Corner area.

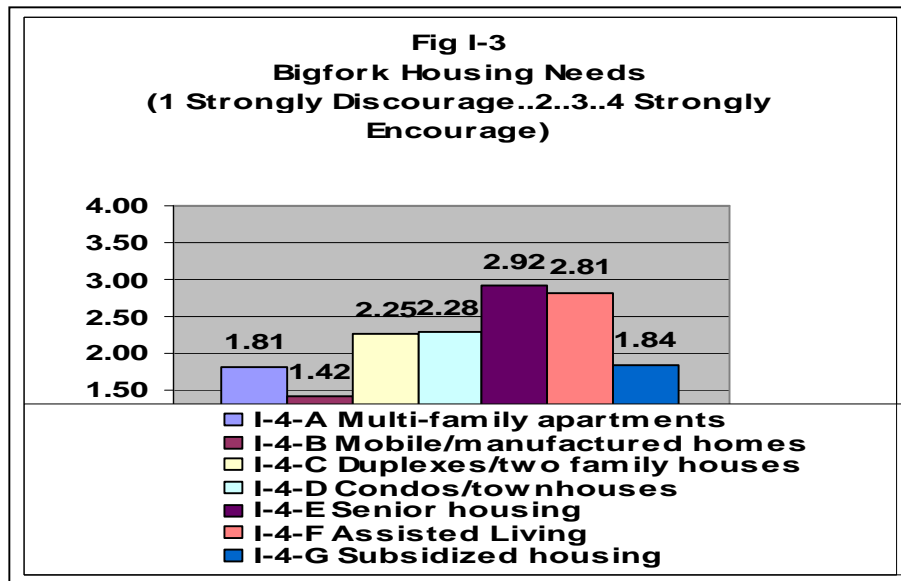
The 1993 Bigfork Plan designated some of these areas as agriculture; however, growth in the Bigfork area since 1993 has made it appropriate to re-designate some of these areas as Suburban Residential and these areas are so noted on **Map 10-Future Land Use Map**. Additional Urban Residential designated areas east of the village are also noted on **Map 10-Future Land Use Map**. These designations do not guarantee that a specific parcel will be approved for a particular zoning classification density of land use in the future. However, the general land use categories should be used along with the applicable goal and policies to assist in providing a guide for land use decisions. Furthermore, there may have been an over identification of residential designation based upon the likelihood that not all property owners may be willing to sell or develop their land. (See **Map 10-Future Land Use Map**)

Excerpts from BPA 2005 Survey

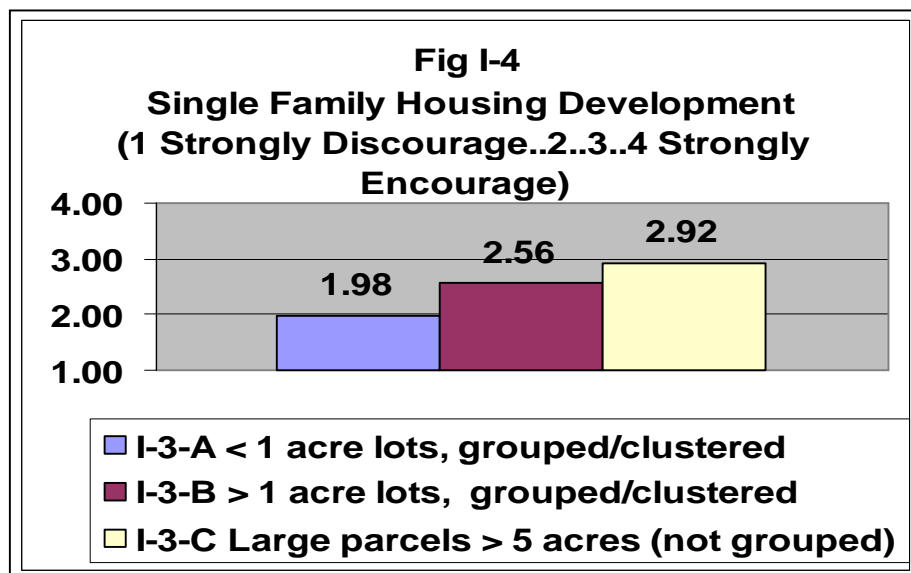
Question I-2 listed the full spectrum of housing types and asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the availability of each type. All housing types received at least a midrange score of 2.5 or higher (Figure I-2) with Assisted Living Facilities.



The perceived need, or lack thereof, for additional housing is made clear in the results of question I-4, as shown in Figure I-3, below. The need for Senior Housing and Assisted Living Facilities received the highest and relatively strong support while the need for Mobile/Manufactured Homes, Multi-family Apartments and Subsidized housing received little validation. The raw scores of 2.25 and 2.28 for Duplex/two family houses, and Condos/townhouses, respectively, do indicate modest support in these areas.



An assessment of Single Family Housing needs (or lack thereof) is found in Figure I-4. Only un-clustered developments of 5 acres or greater received positive support (2.92 on a scale of 1 to 4). Clustered Homes on more than 1 acre received more support (2.56) than did Clustered Homes on less than one acre (1.98)—the latter representing a modest level of discouragement when compared to the other two categories. In a related question on the 1993 survey (Land Use Question #16); eighty percent (80%) of the participants rejected the notion of reducing parcel sizes in their area.



While the data presented in Figures I-2, I-3, and I-4 do reflect the views of survey participants, caution must be used before using these data as the sole guideposts for identifying Bigfork housing needs. As will be discussed later in this analysis, the age (64% over age 55) and economic status (97% land owners) of survey participants may well reflect a bias in this area.

Moreover, for those survey participants already housed in an appropriate manner (and most are based on age and ownership status), it is reasonable to expect they will demonstrate only limited support for housing outside of their anticipated needs. Written comments on housing needs covered a wide-spectrum of opinions ranging from “Let the market decide,” to those centered on preserving the “character” of Bigfork.

Housing Goals and Policies

Goal Statement:

The BLUAC and the BSC will strive to work with Flathead County and the local private and public sectors to facilitate the development of a mix of compatible housing types that maintain the character of Bigfork while meeting the needs of residents at all income levels.

Goal

G.6 Encourage and support residential development densities which are appropriate to existing or planned public facilities and services, which are absent of environmental constraints, and which enhance the character of the community. (Reference Part V-Land Use and Natural Resources)

Policy

P.6.1 Urban residential densities should be located in areas with a significant network of paved public roads, which are served by community water and sewer, which have convenient access to public facilities and services, such as schools, libraries, fire services, and commercial services, all in areas with minimal environmental constraints.

P.6.2 Suburban residential densities should be located in areas with paved roads, convenient access to commercial services, public services and facilities, and should have minimal environmental constraints.

P.6.3 Multi-family housing should be located in areas designated for urban residential densities.

P.6.4 Single family, large lot estate type developments of five acres or larger, should be located away from planned areas of sewer and water to minimize inefficient placement of sewer and water conveyance facilities.

Goal

G.7 Encourage the development of affordable housing and special needs housing opportunities in the BPA.

Policy

P.7.1 Promote special needs and affordable rental and owner-occupied housing in and around Bigfork.

P.7.2 Consult with Bigfork Water and Sewer Department, the Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork, and water and sewer districts within 10 miles of Bigfork to expand water supply and wastewater treatment systems both as a reaction to and anticipating the ongoing need for affordable housing.

- P.7.3 Pursue options of modifying planning department review fees, altering roadway requirements, expediting the review period and providing other incentives for the development of affordable and special needs housing.
- P.7.4 Encourage and support the area-wide efforts in the development of affordable housing, including multi-family and special needs housing, to provide developers with a clear and consistent set of definitions and expectations for improvement, consistent with Flathead County standards.
- P.7.5 Consult with housing program administrators, identified in **Appendix A**, with an operating presence in Flathead County, along with other service providers and private industry leaders, to identify affordable housing opportunities and needs, then pursue solutions.
- P.7.6 Require all new development to pay for and carry their share of costs, through impact fees or other methods, for infrastructure such as, but not limited to, public and community water and sewer, **school expansion**, additional transportation, road requirements, and other needs, consistent with Flathead County impact regulations, *should they be established*.
- P.7.7 Consider incentives for mixing affordable housing with compatible commercial development that encourage seniors and young families to live within walking and/or biking distance of stores and services.
- P.7.8 Encourage and support a combination of public and private programs to support affordable housing.
- P.7.9 Encourage mixed use development types to meet a broad spectrum of housing needs.
- P.7.10** *Recognize the role played by, and need for, manufactured homes in providing affordable housing.*

Goal

- G.8 Encourage housing that maintains traditional development patterns while protecting property values and natural resources.

Policy

- P.8.1 Advocate standards and incentives for the development of housing that continues established patterns such as housing density and style, promotes roadway connectivity, maintains the character of Bigfork, and protects wildlife habitat and water resources.
- P.8.2 Encourage lot size and configuration in rural areas that promote open space and scenic views, while maintaining the character of these areas and supporting agricultural operations.

- P.8.3 Encourage all new development, including of housing sites less than 5 acres, to consider utilizing public water and sewer. Require mandatory installation of underground utilities, where technically and economically feasible, and recommend that developers pay for exterior access road improvements.
- P.8.4 Prevent construction in flood plains, wetlands and natural drainage areas. Recommend development to conform to terrain, and minimize grading on steep slopes to prevent scarring and erosion. (See Map 2-Ground Water Depth, Map 3-100 Year Flood Plain, and Map 4-Steep Slope)
- P.8.5 Advocate incentives for clustered housing and related open space in and around existing population centers.
- P.8.6 Improve public sector coordination between infrastructure providers (public water and sewer) and developers to manage housing growth corridors. (See Map 6-Water Wells, Septic Systems & Bigfork Water and Sewer District)
- ~~P.8.7 Discourage placement of Class B & C manufactured homes (as defined in the Flathead County Zoning Regulations) in areas where permanent homes and/or commercial uses are predominant.~~

PART IV - DOWNTOWN BIGFORK AND COMMERCIAL AREA (Hwy 35 Corridor)

Summary - Conditions and Trends

The findings of the 2005 survey virtually mirror the findings and subsequent Goals, Policies, and Recommendations presented in the 1993 Land Use Plan for downtown Bigfork (the Village) and the commercial area. Thus, it is recommended that the specifics presented in the 1993 Plan remain in the 2006 Bigfork Neighborhood Plan.

Despite years of growth in the BPA, the charm and character of the Village has remained constant. To support the population growth in the BPA, the development of commercial nodes along the Highway 35 corridor has been vigorous and diverse. The management of future commercial growth throughout the BPA will require ongoing assessments of need and identified areas to support growth yet retain the rural charm of the community.

Bigfork Village

The charm of Bigfork Village has been attracting visitors and new residents for decades. The commercial makeup of the Village is diverse but has begun to change significantly as seen by this chart which identifies the number of businesses in each classification.

	<u>1993</u>	<u>2006</u>
Theater	1	1
Library	1	1
Art Galleries	6	14
Real Estate Offices	4	9
Lodging	2	5
Restaurants/Cafes	5	12
Bars/Casinos	3	3
Retail Shops	19	24
Professional	2	5
Services	6	11
Churches	2	1
Banks	0	1

The results of the 2005 Bigfork Survey are consistent with the existing plan based on the 1993 Survey. Both surveys show strong support for a downtown mix of restaurants, specialty stores, art galleries, cultural offerings, and rental accommodations in a consistent architecture style compatible with our current small village image. Therefore, the 1993 Plan's call for architectural requirements for signage, landscaping, construction and parking still apply. However, the 2005 survey reflects a high degree of interest in improving downtown parking, and ingress and egress to the Village.

The concentration of tourist and service-related businesses in the Bigfork Village is not surprising.

- Between 1993 and 2006, the mean increase in the number of businesses in the Village was 67 percent. The significant increase in real estate businesses is a direct result of the rapidly increasing residential development in the BPA.
- Change in economic and business cycles will most likely occur and contribute to a changing mix of businesses in the Village. However, it is unlikely that in the future the Village could sustain yet another 67 percent growth in the number of businesses.

Future commercial expansion in the Village is constrained by its finite boundary. Designating additional commercial density at this time is not deemed appropriate. Presumably the redevelopment of the Village could create additional commercial space by creating multi-floor buildings but it would not be consistent with the desires of the community to maintain the historical character of the Village. Therefore, Bigfork must look elsewhere to create commercial development to support its growing community.

Highway 35 Corridor and Commercial Nodes

The Highway 35 corridor continues to develop from the southern edge of Bigfork (Flathead Lake Lodge Road) north to the intersection with Highways 82 and 83. The makeup of the corridor consists of the following number of businesses in each classification.

	<u>1993</u>	<u>2006</u>
Real Estate	3	4
Lodging	2	2
Restaurants/Cafes	2	4
Bars/Casinos	3	5
Fast Food	2	5
Retail Shops	5	15
Banks	2	3
Professionals	5	10
Services	9	34
Churches	3	7

Unlike the Bigfork Village, which is area-constrained, the Highway 35 corridor has experienced stronger commercial growth.

- Between 1993 and 2006, the mean increase in the number of businesses along the highway 35 corridor and in the commercial nodes was 111 percent.
- As designated in the 1993 Bigfork Area Land Use Plan, the commercial nodes along Highway 35 are providing greater services to the increasing population, as well as attracting a variety of professional businesses.
- Outside of Bigfork Village and the Highway 35 corridor, there are several churches and other retail and commercial concerns in the Echo Lake and Ferndale areas. The aesthetic appeal of these areas contributes economically to the BPA.

With a 47 percent projected population increase by 2025, there will be increasing demands for goods and services to support the Bigfork community that will attract developers, investors, and entrepreneurs. By identifying appropriate areas for commercial growth, Bigfork will be able to guide growth in a manner which will protect its resources and maintain its unique character.

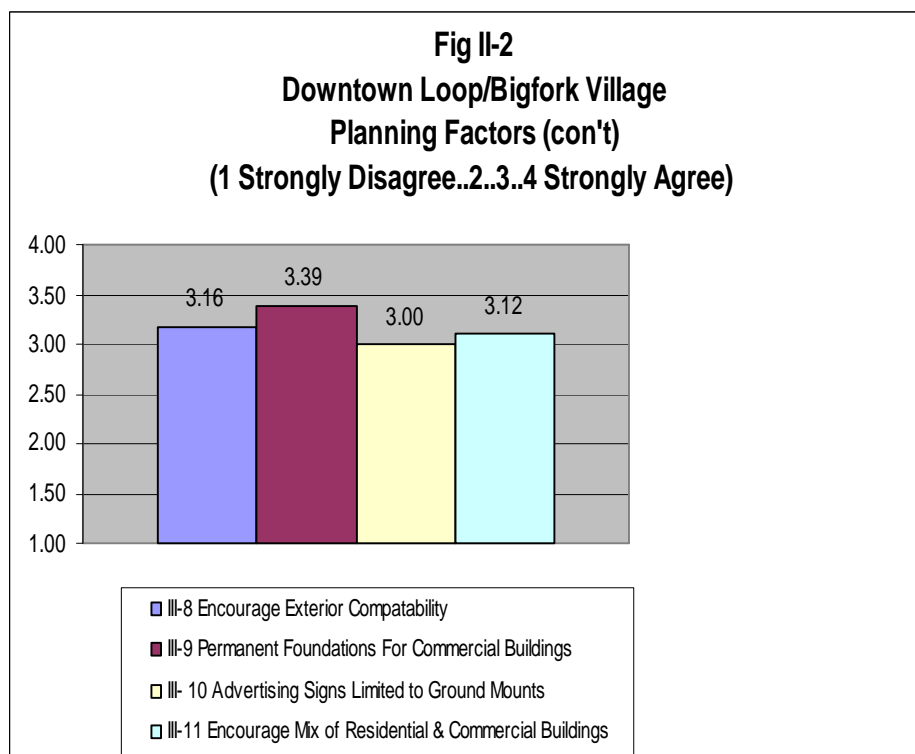
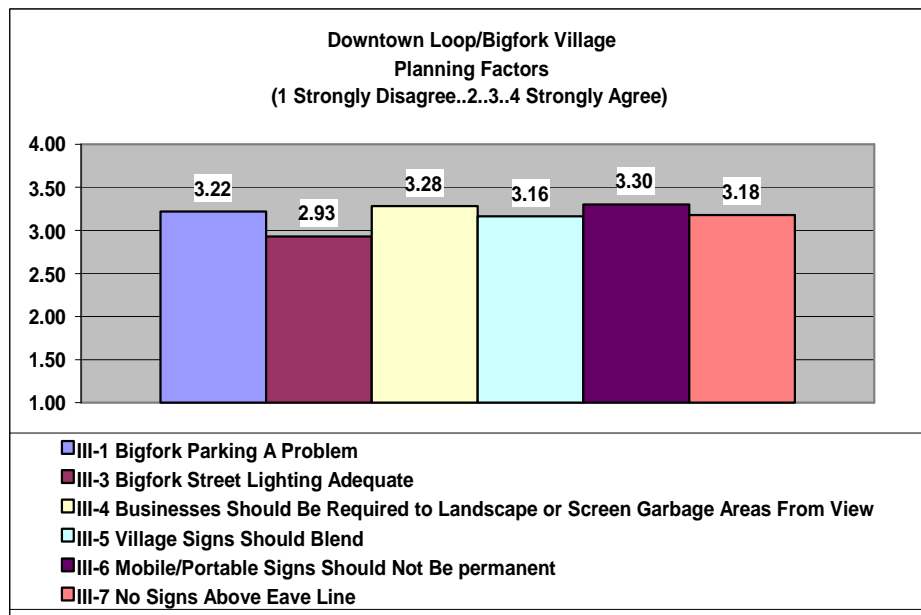
Future commercial expansion within the BPA can be accomplished by utilizing a variety of development tools to enhance Bigfork's economic base without contributing to commercial sprawl. The trend towards the multiple usages of business and residential structures can concentrate both activities in higher population areas where public services exist. By supporting density increases in designated infill areas, orderly commercial growth can occur.

- Outside of the Village there are a total of 224 acres designated as commercial or country corner commercial from the 1993 Bigfork Area Land Use Plan. There are also 40 acres designated light industrial.
- An inventory of this commercial acreage finds that approximately 81 acres are currently undeveloped. However, within that acreage there are 14 subdivided lots (Jewell Basin Plaza) and 14 units (Branding Iron) available for retail and professional services. These are noted for informational purposes only.
- The light industrial designated acreage is approximately 90% undeveloped.
- It is logical to assume that by 2020 the mean number of commercial business could double again.
- Based on these facts, calculations indicate there will be a need for 62 additional acres of commercial designated land for growth to 2020.
- However, by encouraging higher density development the requirement for more commercial designated land could be reduced by half or more. Furthermore, commercial development in the light industrial designated area could greatly reduce the need for new commercial designated land.

Identifying appropriate areas to increase density of commercial development or create new areas for commercial development is imperative to guard against commercial sprawl, and is so noted on **Map 10-Future Land Use Map**. These designations do not guarantee that a specific parcel will be approved for a particular zoning classification density of land use in the future. However, the general land use categories should be used along with the applicable goal and policies to assist in providing a guide for land use decisions. Furthermore, there may have been an over identification of commercial designation based upon the likely hood that not all property owners may be willing to sell or develop their land.

Excerpt from BPA 2005 Survey

Figures III-1 and III-2 below depict the scores associated with ten separate planning factors as they would apply to Bigfork Village. Again, the responses were not cost constrained.



All of the areas scored at the “agree” level with the exception of the adequacy of Bigfork street lighting, which at 2.92 scored just under “agree.” Taken as a whole, these responses reflect a strong desire to keep and/or improve the current village atmosphere of Bigfork.

Anticipating the relatively high concern about parking in the Bigfork Village (3.22), Question

III-2 asked for written suggestions on how to solve this problem. The response rate was a stout forty-eight percent (48%), or seven hundred forty-three (743) specific comments. They ranged from the ridiculous, “put in a subway,” to several more thoughtful suggestions:

*Above ground parking garage
Underground parking garage
Shuttle from school lot to downtown during summer months
Limited employee parking
Electric Ave (one-way) with two-side diagonal parking
Make downtown a pedestrian area*

In the 1993 Survey, sixty-seven percent (67%) of survey participants favored a requirement for additional village parking before approving additional commercial facilities.

Downtown Bigfork and Commercial Area Goals and Policies

Goal Statement:

The BLUAC and the BSC will strive to work with Flathead County, the Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork, the Bigfork Chamber of Commerce, other local organizations, and individuals to maintain the village atmosphere of downtown Bigfork and support commercial development in appropriate areas.

Goal

G.9 Accommodate future commercial development within downtown Bigfork and the commercial area.

Policy

- P.9.1 Support existing commercial centers located at major intersections of arterial routes and provide for limited neighborhood commercial development where appropriate to the neighborhood character.
- P.9.2 Discourage strip development and commercial clutter along arterial highways.
- P.9.3 Transportation corridors should maintain the continued visual enjoyment of both the well-tended agricultural lands and the natural beauty of the area, and provide unimpeded traffic flow.
- P.9.4 New commercial developments should be located in accessible areas conveniently and safely served by all public facilities and services, and exhibiting minimal environmental constraints.
- P.9.5 Infill of commercial development is strongly encouraged for efficient use of existing commercial land and infrastructure.
- P.9.6 Approval of any zoning changes for commercial property should not occur until consideration has been given to the amount and adequacy of existing commercial zoning designations. **(See Map 10-Future Land Use Map)**

Goal

G.10 Foster perpetuation of the Bigfork Village atmosphere and maintenance and development of the Hwy 35 business corridor in a manner consistent with a rural, small town setting.

Policy

P.10.1 Consider creating *BLUAC* subcommittees *comprising of members and non-members to within the BLUAC to:*

1. develop design standards for the Village and Highway 35 corridor, to include lighting, architectural design, color, signage, landscaping, and public art.
2. encourage adherence to design standards part of the application process. All recommended design, signage, and landscaping standards must comply with appropriate zoning.
3. address public parking to identify potential parking pods to accommodate parking throughout the downtown area. Evaluate shuttle service to reduce traffic in the downtown area, especially from June through September.

P.10.2 The new subcommittees should address issues such as lighting, architectural design, signage, landscaping, public art, and parking to ensure compatibility with quality development.

P.10.3 Through public hearings, each subcommittee shall develop findings and recommendations and forward them to the BLUAC, the Flathead County Commissioners, and other reviewing governmental agencies, so that they can become *officially adopted before becoming* a part of the decision making process.

P.10.4 All new development, exterior remodeling or new construction should comply with developmental standards and/or guidelines in adherence to zoning regulations.

P.10.5 The new subcommittees may require professional advisement from the County's Planning Department, similar to the BLUAC. Funding for this activity ~~could~~ *shall* come from ~~other taxing sources or~~ community funding.

PART V - LAND USE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Summary - Conditions and Trends

In the BPA, land use and natural resource management are inescapably intertwined. These two important topics are addressed jointly because survey results demonstrate that residents highly value the area's natural resources, and recognize that their stewardship is a major factor in both maintaining the quality of life and in sustaining a healthy, vibrant local economy. Thus, any discussion of future land use and development necessarily involves natural resource issues.

The trend toward growth and increased density heightens the challenges we face in maintaining the quality of our natural environment, including views, water and air quality, and access to waterways through public lands. Increasing population density in some areas of the BPA also results in greater pressure on wildlife and its habitat. It is critical that our goals and policies promote development in ways that protect or minimize the adverse impact on our natural resources and surroundings.

Survey respondents generally did not suggest significant specific zoning changes. However, survey respondents clearly demonstrate the community belief that future development should be guided by our natural resources. Development should take into consideration aquifer depth, quality and quantity, the location of seismic areas, and fire danger, as well as recreational uses. Development should respect scenic value, historic value, wildlife corridors, and threatened or endangered species.

Future development in the BPA is likely, and if properly done, desirable. Good development recognizes that the BPA's natural resources and surroundings play a critical role in attracting visitors and new residents, and in supporting and maintaining the local economy. Without careful stewardship of our open spaces, our clean rivers and lakes, and our unique natural habitat, the very features that make the BPA special and desirable, will diminish.

Current Land Use Designations

The BPA encompasses fifty-one square miles and enjoys 5.75 miles of Flathead Lake shoreline, 4.6 miles of Flathead River and 12.5 miles of Swan River shorelines. The BPA is currently identified by Flathead County with the following use categories and existing acreages.

Agricultural	27,676	Commercial	216
Suburban Residential	2,476	Resort Commercial	114
Quarter Circle/LA Ranch	1,815	Light Industrial	40
Public	374	Commercial Village Resort	22
Urban Residential	207	Country Corner Commercial	8

Residential and commercial development in the BPA has escalated dramatically since 2000. That trend is projected to continue over the next several years, as indicated by the number of lots already given preliminary or final plat approval, expressions of interest by developers and individual home buyers in additional properties, and the increasing number of applications for connections to the Bigfork Water and Sewer District. Additionally, in currently zoned

residential areas, density pressures are becoming more evident as lot sizes decrease due to the escalating prices for undeveloped land.

During the public input process, and while developing this plan, a number of land owners submitted suggested zoning changes to their specific properties. These suggestions have been forwarded to the BLUAC for review and incorporation in the planning and zoning recommendation process, as it deems appropriate. As well, these suggestions are included verbatim in **Appendix B**.

Land Types, Uses, and Densities

As development occurs throughout the BPA, individual property rights will be honored and all types of development considered with an eye on mitigating negative impacts in order to protect public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or the general welfare of the community (section 76-1-106 MCA). Because of the number of issues and the diversity of the interested parties, it is difficult, if not impossible to meet all expectations. This section must, and does, reflect the diverse nature of the Bigfork area.

To develop a guide for future growth and development in Bigfork, the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan has created a variety of land use designations with densities and criteria for subdivision and development purposes. Though all of the BPA has already been zoned to a more definitive degree provided for by these designations, they are repeated in this paragraph for informational purposes and clarification and are identified on **Map 10-Future Land Use Map**. Consideration of the level of public facilities and services shall be given when any zone changes are requested that increase density and/or intensity of land use.

- Public Lands - lands under jurisdiction of public entities, federal administration and control, such as U.S. Forest Service or other federal agencies, and state and county jurisdiction. Facilities include but are not limited to parks, schools, libraries, and public utility sites.
- Agricultural Lands - designated areas for agricultural production should be protected from the encroachment of residential and other more intensive development. Schools, fire stations, and parks are appropriate in this designation. Zoning designations in these areas range from Suburban Agriculture (SAG) 5 to Agriculture (AG) 80. This spectrum of zoning designations should be applied in a manner that implements the goals and policies of the plan in areas designated as AG on Map 10. Further guidance for the appropriate use of the spectrum of Agricultural zoning designations is as follows:
 1. Areas furthest away from public facilities and services or exhibiting multiple, compounding environmental constraints to development are appropriate to utilize AG-80 zoning. This large-lot zoning is used to protect ongoing agricultural and silvicultural operations from the intrusion of development as well as prevent development from being located where it is most inefficiently served and/or has the greatest potential for significant harm to the environment or safety of residents. Growth is not planned for these areas and public services and facilities are designed accordingly.
 2. Areas far from public facilities and services or exhibiting significant environmental constraints to development are appropriate to utilize AG-40 zoning. This large-lot zoning is used to protect ongoing agricultural and

silvicultural operations from the intrusion of development as well as prevent development from being located where it is most inefficiently served and/or has the potential for significant harm to the environment or safety of residents. Growth is not planned for these areas and public services and facilities are designed accordingly.

3. Areas located at the outer boundaries of safe, healthy and efficient provision of public services and served by public facilities such as gravel roads or marginal paved roads are appropriate to utilize AG-20 zoning. This zone is intended to control the intrusion of higher densities and more intensive land uses into areas where facilities and services are not planned to be improved, upgraded or newly constructed, but where those same services can safely and efficiently accommodate 20-acre densities. The presence of environmental constraints also limits density and/or the use of property.
 4. SAG-10 zoning is appropriate for areas exhibiting the attributes of rural services and facilities, and where a transition between AG zones and residential areas is appropriate. Paved roads, adequate emergency service response times, minimal environmental constraints and the ability to fully create lots with building areas unaffected by environmental constraints are indicators of where this intensity of growth should be guided. Access to schools and basic commercial services should be within a reasonable driving distance, so as to limit vehicle miles traveled and traffic on rural roads not designed to accommodate growth.
 5. In areas adjacent to Residential designations with efficient service provision, convenient access to public facilities, paved roads and no environmental constraints, SAG-5 zoning is an appropriate use and density. As the smallest “agricultural” designation, small hobby farms, horse pastures and rural single family residential dwellings exemplify areas where this zone is used.
- Suburban Residential - is a medium-density range of single family residential dwellings and cluster development. All public services should be conveniently and efficiently located close to areas designated residential. Commercial and industrial land uses are not appropriate (mixed uses are accommodated in some commercial zones). Examples of typical zoning in this designation would be R-2.5, R-1 and RC-1.
 1. Areas at the most rural fringes of residential designations that are free of environmental constraints or have constraints imposed by the built environment should utilize the R-2.5 zoning designation. Examples would be areas that are clearly residential and have been for some time, but were developed lacking adequate infrastructure and/ or services. These areas would typically be on individual wells and septic systems, but could utilize public water and sewer if developed with a clustering technique to preserve scenic areas and/or open space and get a bonus density for the developer/landowner.
 2. R-1 and RC-1 zoning designations are appropriate at the fringes of public water and sewer, where extensions are either recently completed or very likely. Similarly to the R-2.5 zoning, these areas should be appropriate for cluster developments, PUDs, golf course, and other areas where open lands can be preserved through efficient use of facility expansion.

- Urban Residential - is a range of higher density single-family residential dwellings, duplexes, multi-family dwellings and apartment buildings. This designation is intended for development to be adjacent to and served by public services and community facilities. Sidewalks, shielded streetlights, curbs and gutters are common and appropriate facilities at Urban Residential densities. Examples of typical zoning in this designation would be R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, and RA-1.
 1. The R-2 zoning is the smallest lot size that could still possibly be on community water and individual septic systems. This density of septic systems is not to be encouraged, and the R-2 zoning designation should primarily be utilized for large-lot developments on public water and sewer, with site-specific exceptions. R-2 zoning should be used in areas where commercial and public services are available within a short distance, possibly even bicycling distance. The R-2 designation is for areas free of all natural and human environmental constraints.
 2. R-3 zoning is intended for areas served by public water and sewer with a distinctly single-family character, where duplexes and higher intensity residential land uses would be out of character with the neighborhood.
 3. R-4 zoning is for mixed-density neighborhoods where duplexes and single family residential uses are common, or where mixes of rental and owner-occupied single-family dwellings would make conversion or construction of duplexes appropriate as infill density.
 4. R-5 is for areas similar in character to the R-4 designation, but where even higher densities and infill are desirable to serve a community housing need.
 5. Areas of Bigfork where high densities of single-family dwellings and duplexes exist adjacent to or mixed with low-intensity commercial uses are opportunities to utilize the RA-1 zoning. RA-1 zoning should be used to accommodate the broadest spectrum of housing choices and provide adjacent commercial services that will serve a segment of the population that may lack mobility.
- Commercial - allows for higher density retail and commercial uses and includes shopping centers, banks, restaurants, professional businesses and office centers. These districts should be developed as nodes and not in “strip” commercial patterns. Development would be in areas with public or community sewer systems.
 1. In areas where limited, community-based commercial services would be appropriate to serve an area of residential growth, the B-1 and B-7 zones can be used in accordance with their respective definitions and the goals and policies of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan.
 2. B-2 and B-3 zones should be utilized in accordance with their respective definitions and the goals and policies of the Plan to create or maintain destination commercial centers that are typically accessed by personal vehicle and generate parking and traffic needs that cannot be met on a smaller scale. These zones are intended to serve the entire community, not just individual residential sub-areas. This designation should be used only in areas where adequate buffers (natural or created) protect adjacent lands.
- Resort Commercial - allows for low density resort facilities such as resorts, lodges, dude ranches and country inns.

1. The BR-2 and BR-4 zones are typically utilized (with their Overall Development Plan requirements) to implement this land use designation.
 2. If lands are not owned by a single owner or unified group of owners, then the B-5 or B-6 zones would be an appropriate implementation of this designation. These zones should be utilized in accordance with their respective definitions and the goals and policies of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan.
- Village Resort Commercial- provides for two or more categories of commercial uses within the same development, intended to maintain intimacy and human scale in a village setting. For example, the ground floor should be reserved for retail and second floors should be permitted residential. CVR zoning is an appropriate implementation of village character.
 - Country Corner Commercial - provides for neighborhood services and travelers supplies on a small scale, including restaurants, convenience stores, Laundromats, accessory stores, fuel, and auto services. Examples of zoning in this designation would be CCC-1 and CCC-2.
 - Light Industrial - applies to areas of light industrial use in proximity to major transportation routes. Typical uses would be manufacturing and processing centers, gravel extraction/processing, and product distribution centers, but only when not in proximity to residential areas and where safety, esthetics, or quality of life would be adversely impacted. I-1 and I-1H are examples of zoning for this area, depending on the proximity to a major highway. There are no locations within the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan area that are appropriate for heavy industry based on the goals and policies of the Flathead County Growth Policy.

Maps provided by Flathead County GIS department provided the analytical tools necessary to determine the use of land throughout the BPA. The maps indicate those areas that present physical and environmental constraints to development, as well as those tracts of land that are under state and federal ownership or in conservation easements.

Physical Constraints

Topography, seismic areas, high ground water, and floodplains, limit the availability and density of residential and commercial development. (**See Map 2-Ground Water Depth, Map 3-100 Year Flood Plain, and Map 4-Steep Slopes.**) An earthquake fault exists east of Foothill Road, in the Swan Range. This area is not the ideal location for high density, septic-based housing, as a significant seismic event could rupture septic tanks and pollute the aquifer that supplies drinking water to the BPA. Areas within the 100-year flood plain are similarly constrained, and encroachment on any of the 2,475 acres of wetlands in the BPA would bring significant threat to our clean streams, rivers and lakes. In addition to the well-known benefit that wetlands have on wildlife, wetlands also act as the “kidneys” for adjacent rivers, stream and lakes by cleansing runoff water before it enters the associated body of water.

Throughout the BPA, numerous tracts of land are under state and federal ownership or management or are in conservation easements. (**See Map 5-Administrative Constraints**) These areas are not available for development.

Equally as important, our existing water and sewer infrastructure, coupled with expansion plans, should strongly influence residential and commercial development. (**See Map 6- Water Wells, Septic Systems, and Bigfork Water and Sewer District.**)

Environmental Constraints

The respondents to the Bigfork Survey overwhelmingly cited the need to protect scenic areas, preserve wildlife and its habitat, and maintain the rural environment currently enjoyed within the BPA. **Map 7-Environmental Constraints** indicates that a concentration of mule deer and elk winter range dominates the eastern, less-populated portion of the BPA. Migration corridors, waterfowl production areas, healthy wetlands, and waterways cannot be protected if high density residential development spreads eastward in the predominately agricultural zoned area. However, the risk to wildlife and the environment can be mitigated by clustering development to insure open migration corridors, preservation of native grasses, and clean water.

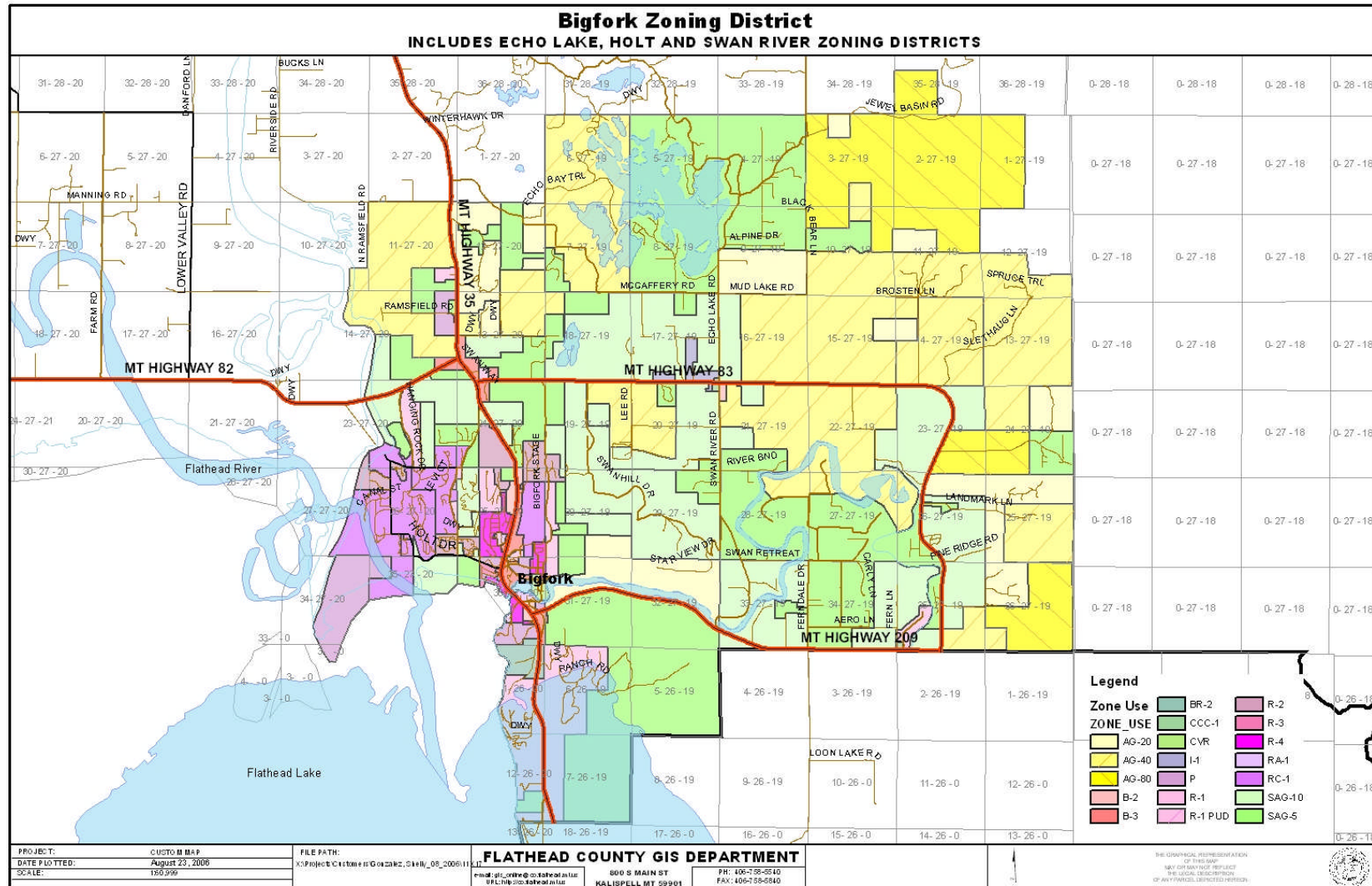
Conclusion

The above analysis leads to the following conclusions:

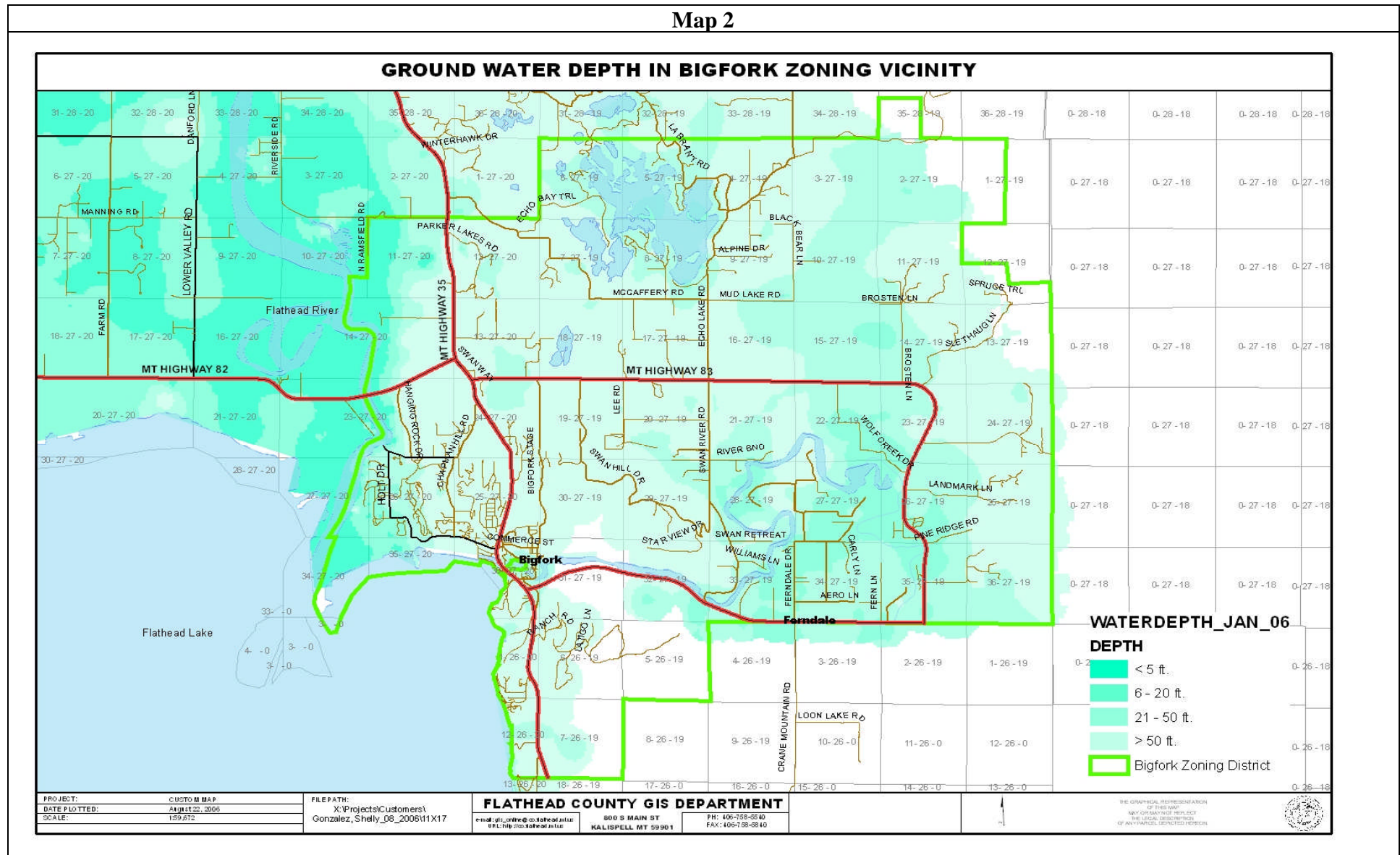
- High-density residential development should be encouraged in areas supported by Bigfork Water and Sewer District, and not supported in areas of environmental importance, unless the risks to the environment are significantly mitigated.
- Commercial development should be supported in existing zoned areas, in nodes, and not “strip” commercial patterns.
- Industrial development should be in areas where the safety and quality of life of Bigfork residents and visitors would not be negatively impacted.

The graphical representation of the following maps supplied by Flathead County GIS Department and Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department may or may not reflect the legal description or other designation of any parcel depicted hereon.

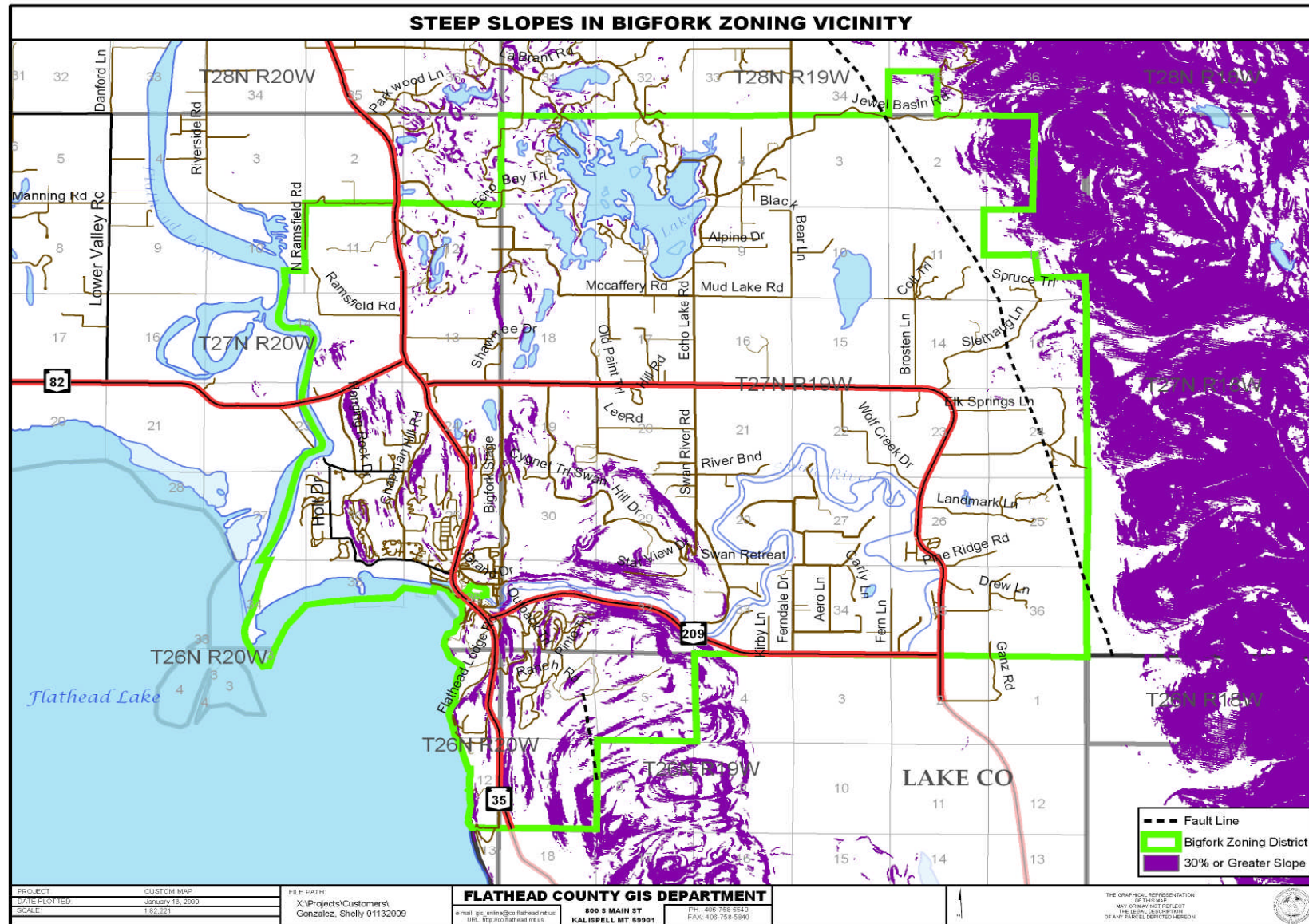
Map 1



Map 2

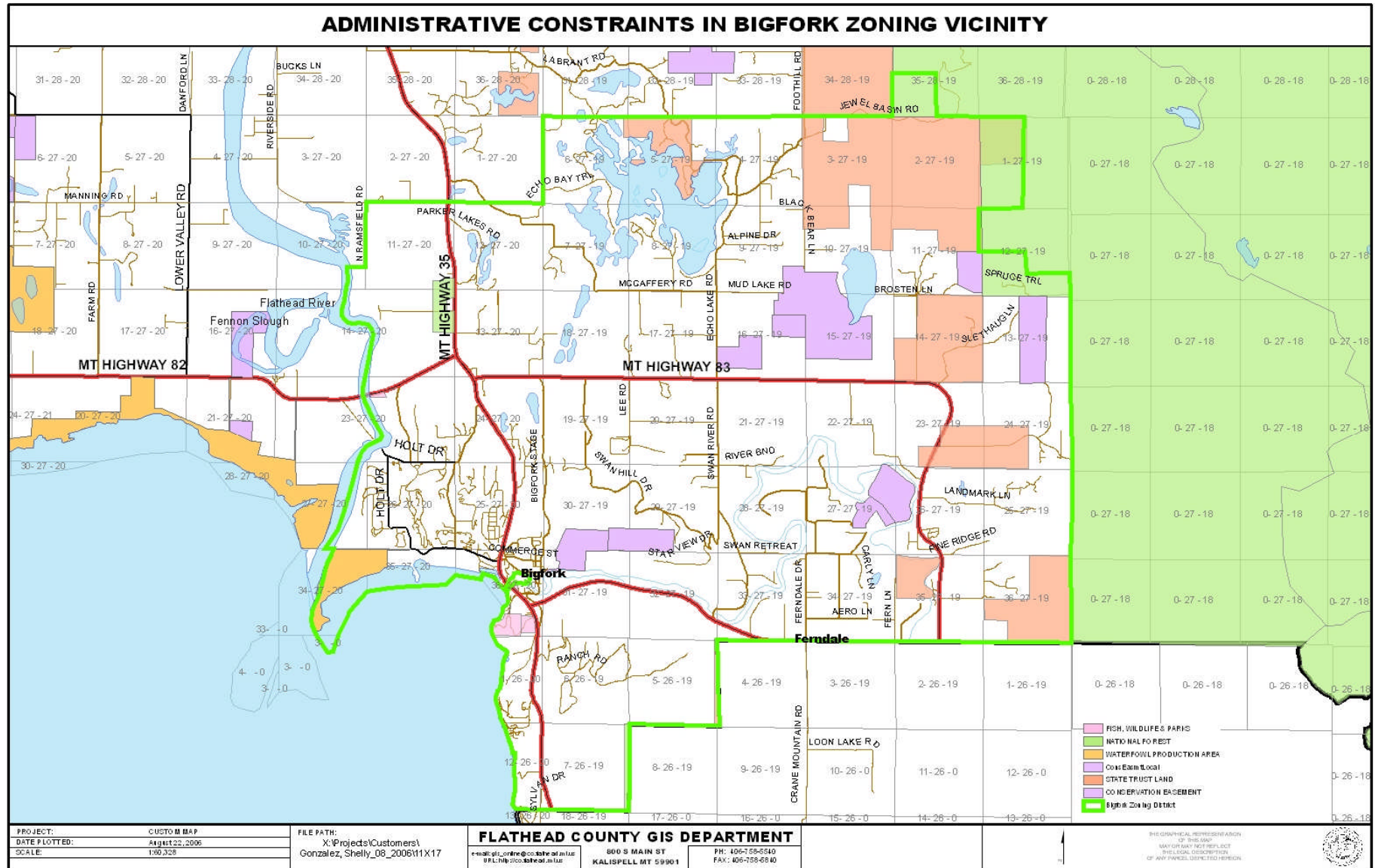


Map 4

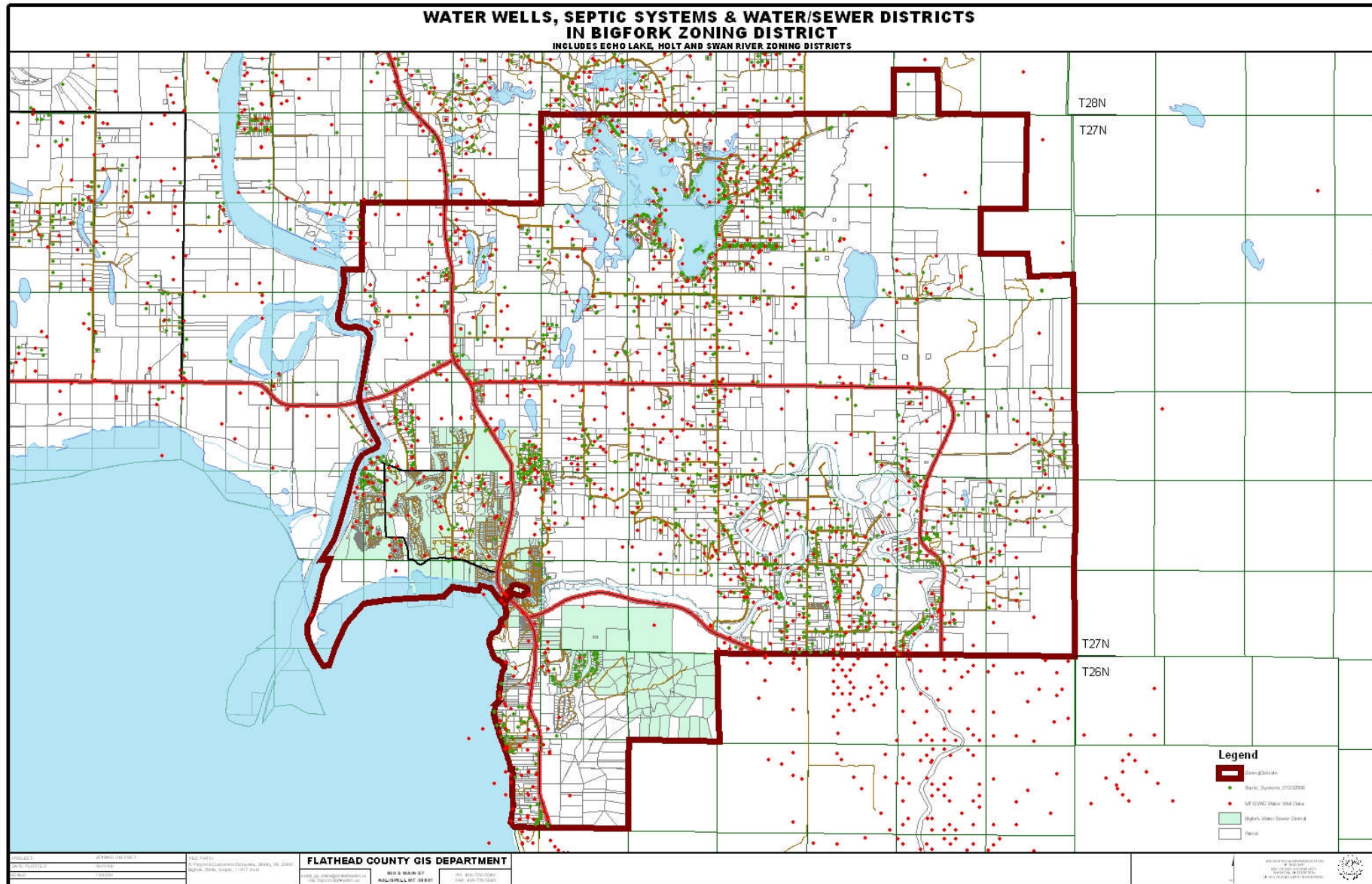


Map 5

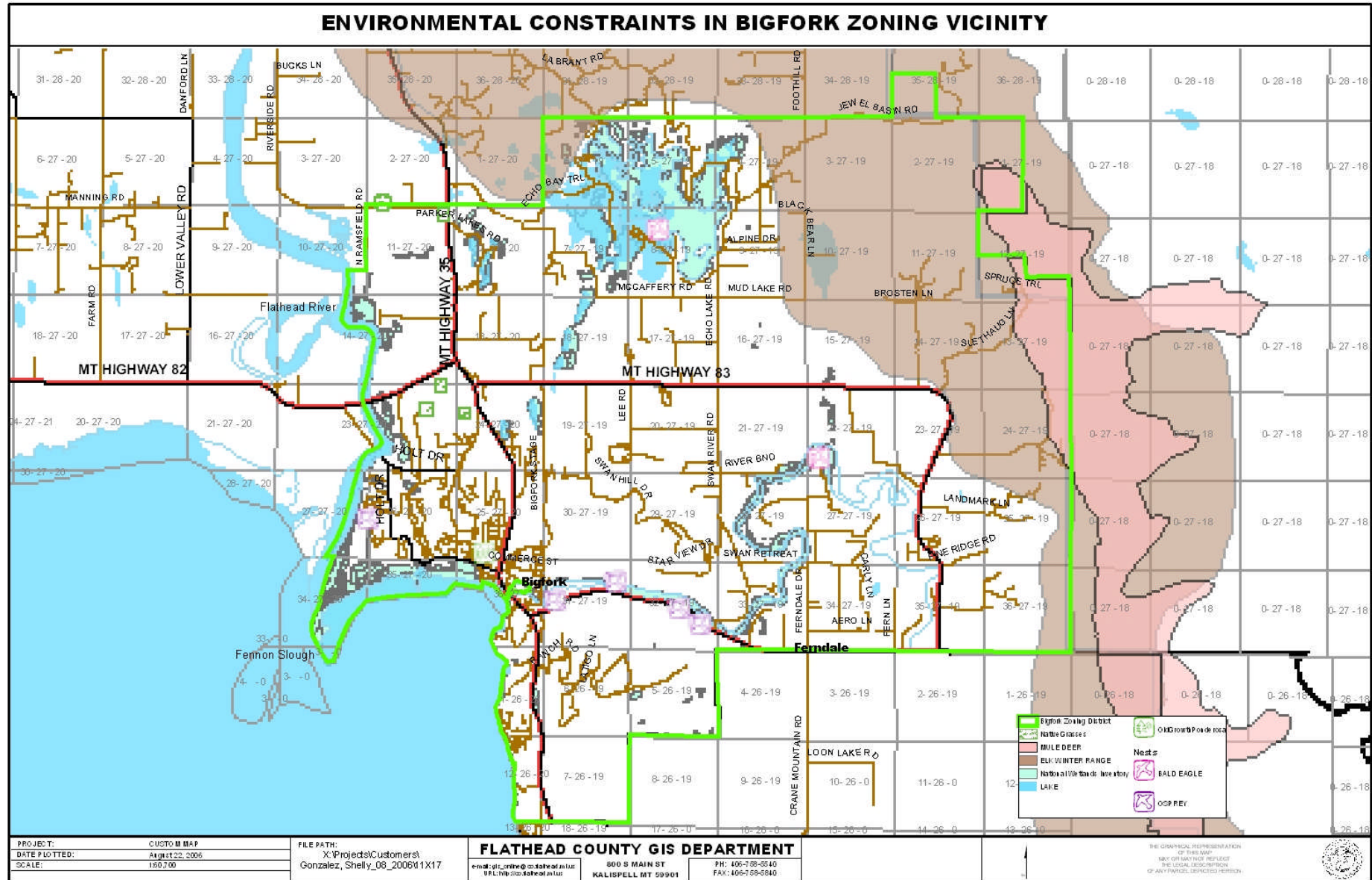
ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS IN BIGFORK ZONING VICINITY



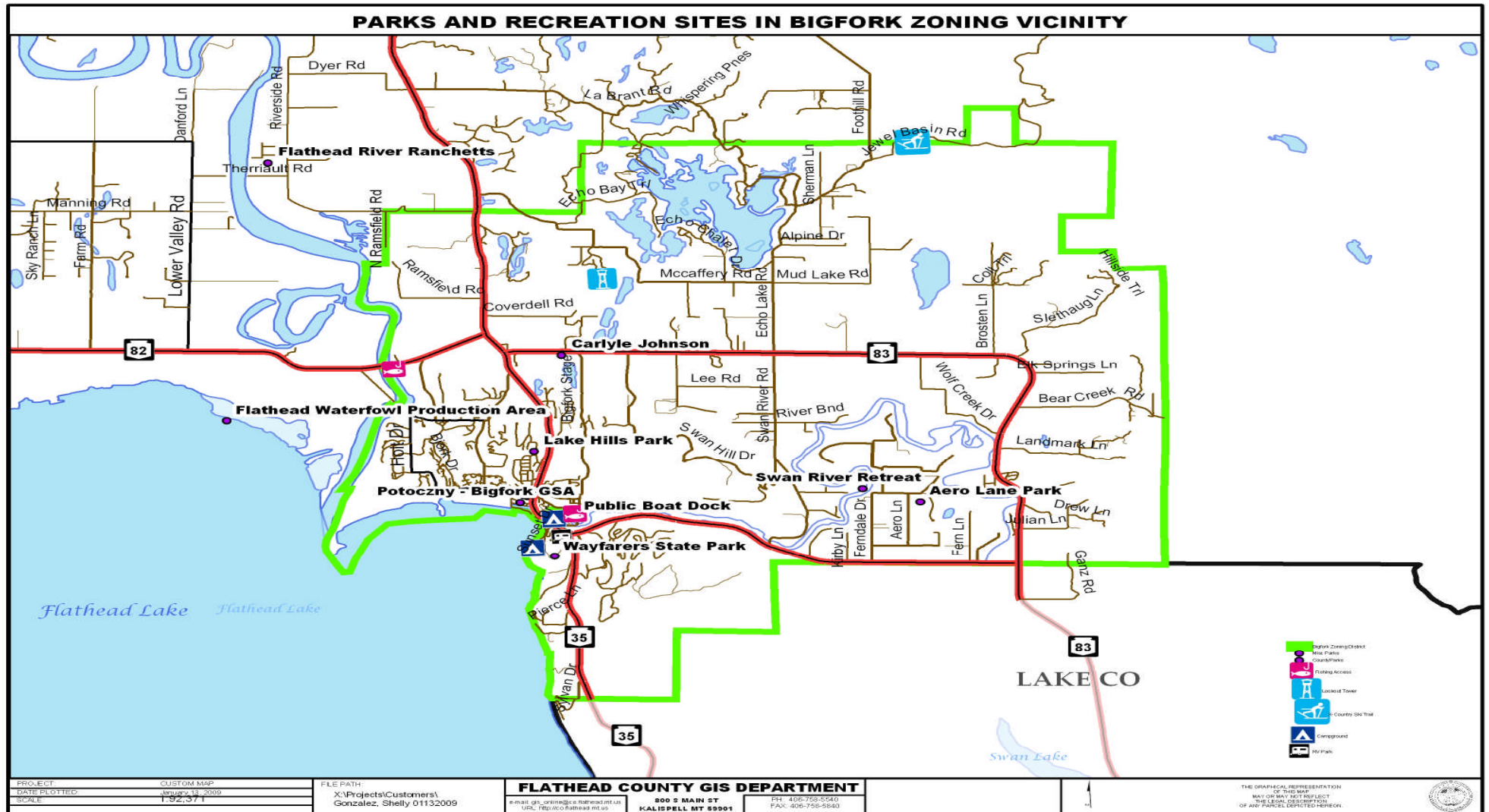
Map 6



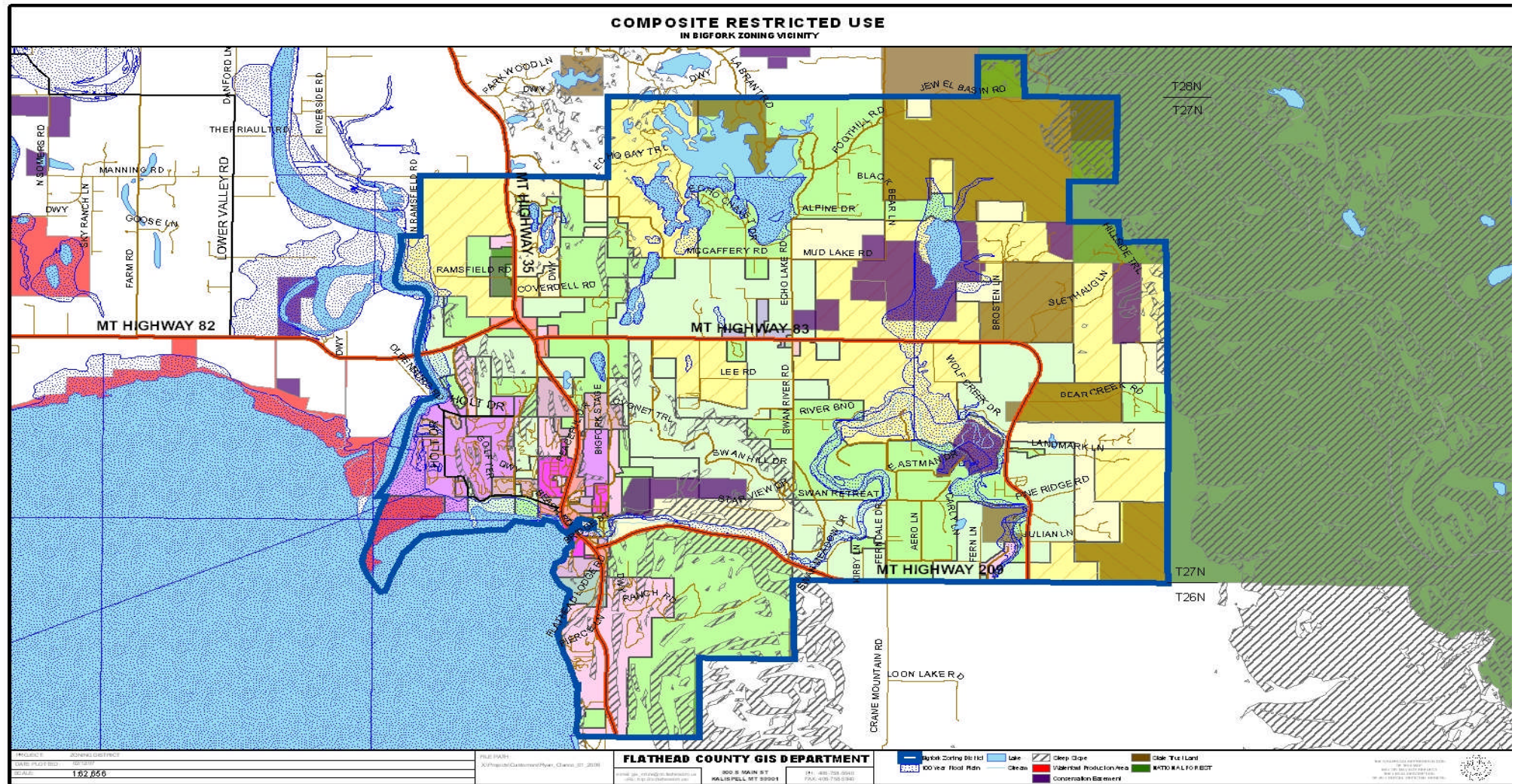
Map 7



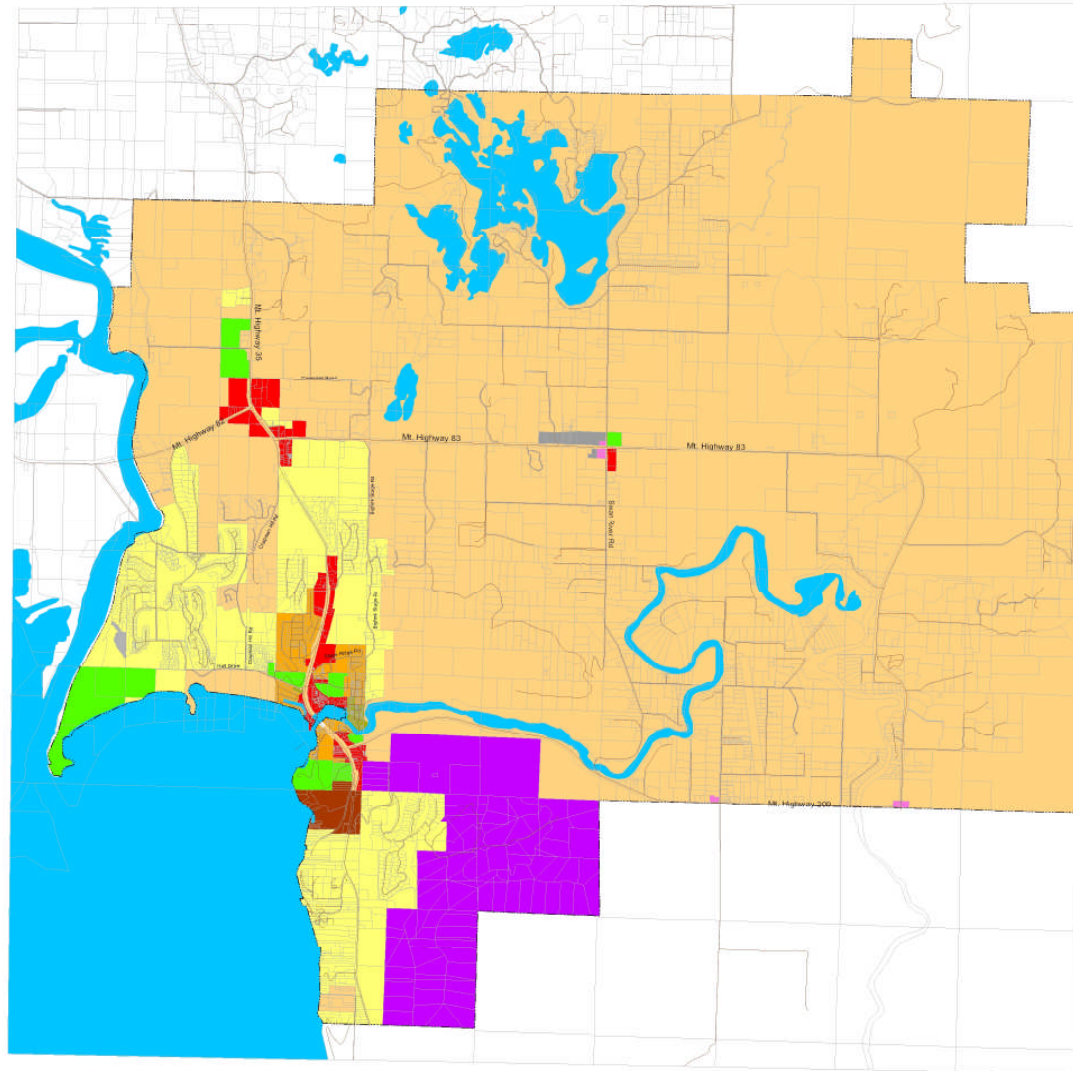
Map 8



Map 9

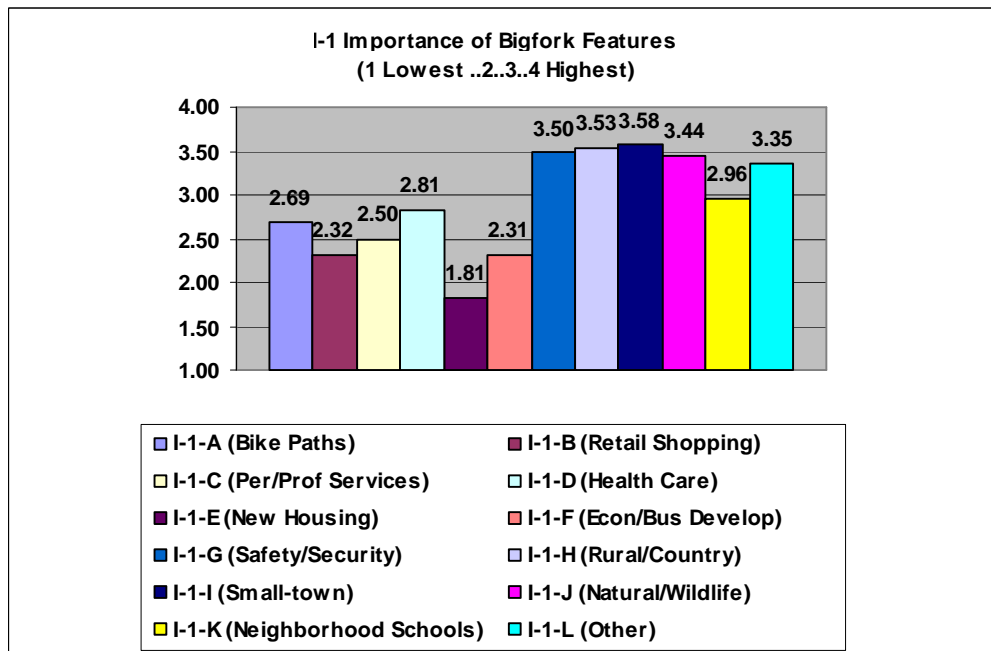


Map 10
Bigfork Area Land Use Plan
Future Land Use Map

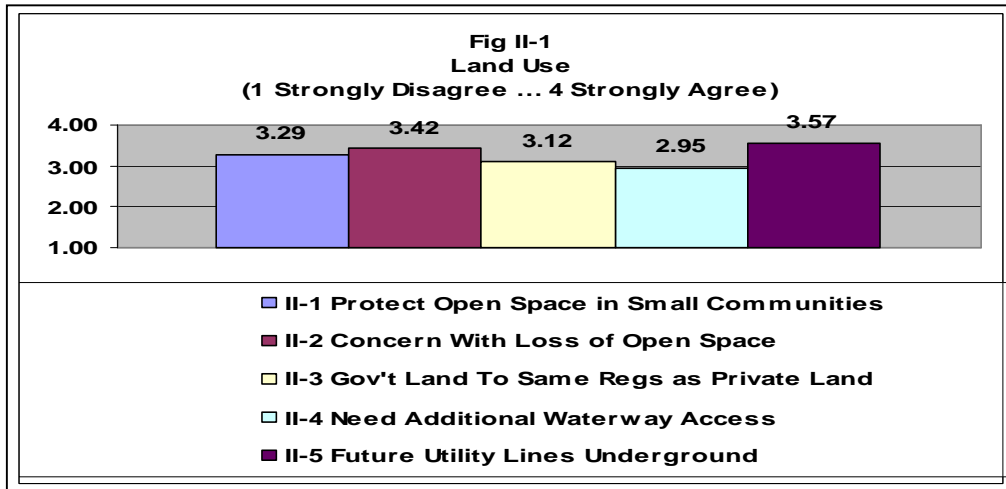


Excerpts from BPA 2005 Survey

In question I-1, survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of a variety of community characteristics on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest). As shown below (Figure I-1), Small Town Environment, Rural/Country Environment, Safety/Security, and Natural/ Wildlife were all strongly supported in the 3.5 range. New housing, Economic Development and Retail Shopping received the lowest scores. Consistent with these results, when asked to choose the two most important features from the list, 76.6 percent of respondents cited Small Town Environment, Rural/Country Environment, Natural Environment/Wildlife Habitat, and Safety/Security as the most important features of greater Bigfork. Personal/Professional Services (1.1%), New Housing (2.1%) and Retail Shopping (2.2%) received the lowest scores in this area.

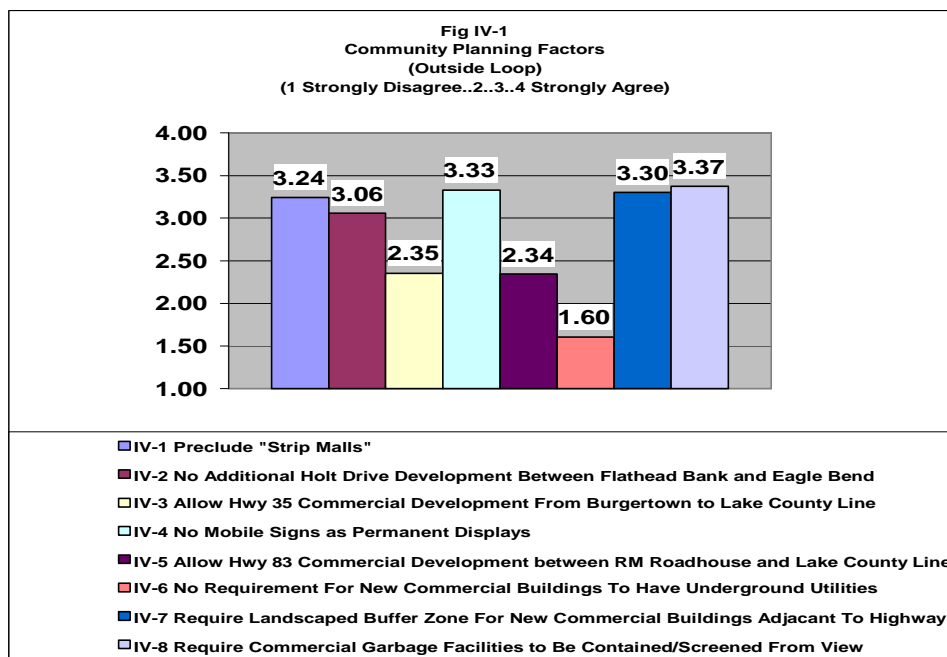


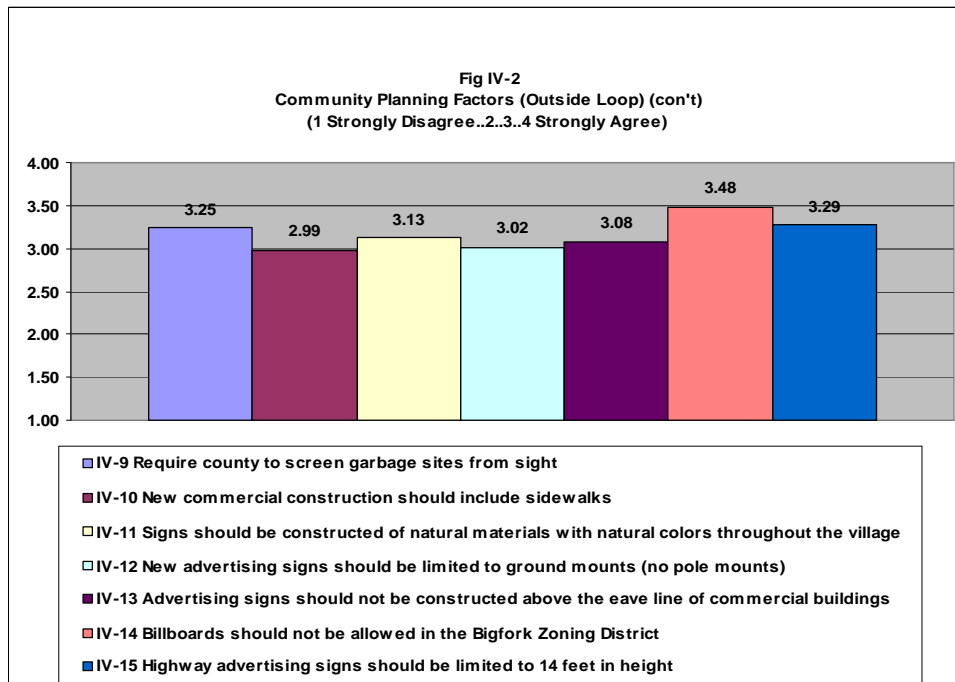
Responses to land use questions (Figure II-1, below), ranging from a high of 3.57 to a low of 2.95, reveal generally strong support for all categories included in the question. Placement of future utility lines underground received the highest rating (3.57) while need for additional waterway access posted 2.95—the lowest of the five areas, but nonetheless a score of considerable strength. The score on a perceived requirement for underground utilities is consistent with the 1993 survey results (Land Use Question #28) as eighty-five percent (85%) of those surveyed favored underground utilities.



Outside the Loop

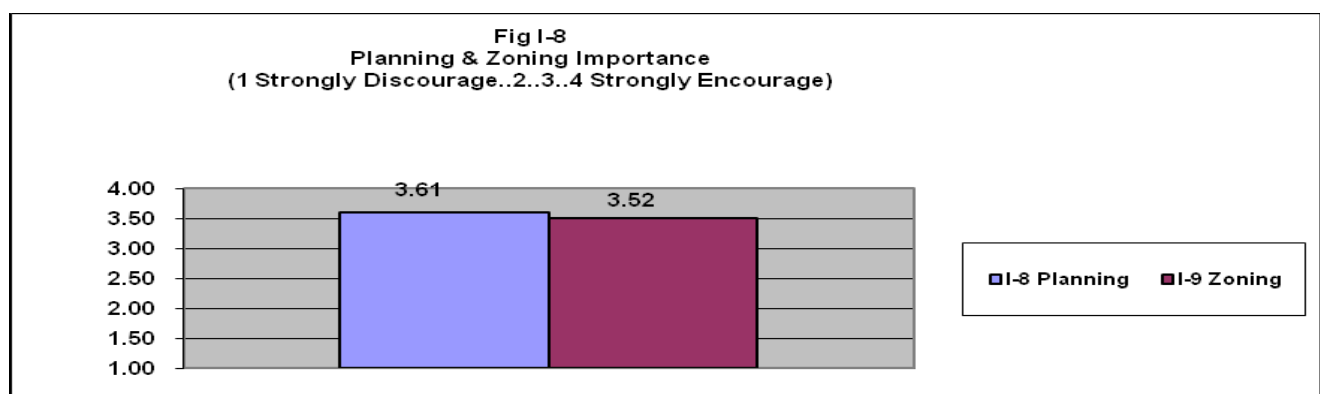
These questions explored various issues pertaining to area aesthetics as well as location-defined development questions. The specific results are easily gained from Figure IV-1 and Figure IV-2, below. Generally, respondents showed less than positive support for additional commercial development in the specific areas cited in this section: Holt Drive between Flathead Bank and Eagle Bend; Hwy 35 from Burger Town south to the boundary between Flathead and Lake Counties; Hwy 83 corridor between Rocky Mountain Roadhouse to the boundary between Flathead and Lake Counties. A determination of just where additional commercial development would be encouraged is not addressed in the survey. Without exception, aesthetic issues (e.g., mobile/portable signs, screened garbage collection facilities, signage requirements, etc.) all received very positive support.





The responses in Section IV lead to the conclusion that when confronting growth issues, survey participants feel that maintaining the pastoral atmosphere of Bigfork and the surrounding area are imperatives of significant importance. However, the results do not really indicate an indictment of growth and economic development. Rather, the blend of responses point to support for growth as long as it does not unduly impinge on the overriding greater good of maintaining the essential character of the area.

Figure I-8, below, represents the results of questions I-8 and I-9. As is clear from the graph, respondents expressed very positive support for the notion that planning and zoning are essential steps in ensuring a positive future for Bigfork. **It is noteworthy that the response (3.61) to question I-8 (planning) received the highest score of all questions asked in the survey.**



Land Use Recommendations

The land use planning effort has been modestly simpler as over the past few years the entire BPA has already been zoned by Flathead County with input from the BLUAC. As cited previously, **Map 1-Bigfork Zoning District** and **Map 10-Designated Land Use** depict the current zoning as well as desirable growth areas based upon sound community planning principles with specific attention being given to the location of wildlife areas, aquifers, fault lines, depth of ground water, and other relevant factors.

Specific recommendations for achieving our goals regarding commercial and residential development and our environment are discussed in those specific sections. In addition, we recommend the following:

1. **Impact fees:** The County should immediately *consider* implementing an impact fee program, as provided by Section 7-6-1601, et seq., MCA (2005), to fund additional service capacity required by specific developments.
2. **Joint Flathead-Lake County Inter-Local Agreement:** As residents of Lake County School Districts 38J and 73 generally view themselves as part of the greater Bigfork community, as the school portion of their property taxes supports the Bigfork school system. Therefore, the composition, rules, and procedures of the BLUAC should be modified to allow an Inter-Local agreement that serves residents of both Flathead and Lake Counties, *should the respective boards of county commissioners enter into one.*
3. **Notice of Public Meetings:** Adjacent owners and community residents have at times felt that they did not receive notice of proposed developments early enough in the planning and approval process to obtain complete information and form an educated opinion about the merits or disadvantages of a proposal. This is particularly true in the BPA because a significant number of landowners are absentee owners, and many additional residents leave the area seasonally. Giving developers additional opportunity to provide the public with information about their proposed plan, answer questions, and hear the public's concerns will help improve communication and allow problems to be solved on the community level. Therefore, we recommend that applicants who intend to request zone changes, other land use designation changes, subdivisions, variances, or conditional use permits in the BPA should be encouraged to hold a public meeting with the BLUAC, on site if possible, to present their plans between the pre-application and formal application process.
4. **Open Space Funding:** Explore the use of options for funding such as bonding, conservancy funds, and/or private donations, as a means to purchase, from willing sellers, land for uses such as open space, parks, and other public uses.
5. **Use of Neighborhood Plan:** Survey response strongly supported requiring the BLUAC to use the BNP as the guiding document when making planning and zoning determinations *recommendations*. ~~We recommend that the use of this Plan is required.~~

BLUAC acknowledges that the BNP is not regulatory and will not be used solely to recommend denial of an application.

6. **Enforcement of Zoning Regulations:** ~~We insist that~~ *It is* Flathead County's *responsibility to* enforce its zoning regulations in ~~cooperation~~ *coordination* with recommendations from the BLUAC.

Land Use and Natural Resources Goals and Policies

Goal Statement:

The BLUAC and the BSC will strive to work with Flathead County to support quality growth and development in concert with maintaining a healthy quality of life for the community. The property rights of individuals ~~will should~~ be balanced with the good of the community. The protection of clean water, wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat, and farmland ~~will should~~ be balanced by supporting natural resource utilization.

Commercial and Industrial Development

Goal

- G.11 Preserve and improve the unique diversity of natural and man-made cultural and recreational amenities that provide the BPA with its unique character, and form the foundation of the local economy. **(See Map 8-Parks and Recreation Sites)**

Policy

- P.11.1 Encourage developers to provide open space within commercial development.
- P.11.2 Open space, trails, and other public areas should be located adjacent to or as a continuation of existing or planned open spaces.

Goal

- G.12 Maintain the intimacy and human scale of the village atmosphere in the existing Bigfork commercial area, while providing residents with needed services and goods. Prevent strip development and commercial clutter along arterial highways. Development should be designed to have minimal impact on transportation corridors and scenic areas. Development shall not impede traffic flow.

Policy

- P.12.1 Commercial development uses, as defined in the Flathead County Zoning Regulations, should be concentrated in existing commercial nodes and at major intersections of arterial routes. Light and heavy industrial uses shall be so located.
- P.12.2 Developers should be required to remit to the appropriate agency the costs of public facilities, as defined in MCA 7-6-1601 sub-section 7 et. seq. (2005), for new, expanded, or modified development, where upgrades or expansion is required due to impact. Consistent with Section 7-6-1601, et seq., MCA, this assessment shall include costs associated with impacts on the areas immediately adjacent to the development, as well as measurable costs associated with impact on the infrastructure of any surrounding broader area.

- P.12.3 Commercial retail and service activities should be sited to provide convenient, accessible services while minimizing their adverse impact on residential neighborhoods, and should be appropriate to the character of the neighborhood.
- P.12.4 Commercial development shall provide safe pedestrian and cart access, including sidewalks, appropriate traffic control, and adequate parking for customers and employees. Businesses within the Village should consider employee parking outside the Village or in areas that will not interfere with customer parking and foot traffic.
- P.12.5 All new commercial development or remodeling which expands the commercial space available shall include on-site and off-street parking, and adhere to Flathead County zoning regulations.
- P.12.6 Promote a cooperative effort of property owners, business operators, and community members to provide needed parking in the Village area.
- P.12.7 Signage should meet the following requirements as defined by zoning regulations:
1. advertising signs shall be limited to permanent ground or building-mounted signs.
 2. ground-mounted signs shall be limited to a maximum of 14 feet in height and 32 square feet in surface area per side.
 3. building-mounted signs shall be no higher than the eave line and shall not be attached to the roof. Such signs should not exceed 10% of street front façade.
 4. pole signs, signs attached to trees, and billboards shall not be permitted.
 5. portable signs, vehicles, and trailers shall not be allowed for permanent, immobile display except for sandwich boards which shall be allowed for special events, not to exceed three days.
 6. off-premises signs shall not be permitted, except for directional signs, subject to the limits set out above.
 7. at a minimum, signage shall meet state and county standards.
- P.12.8 Signage guidelines are encouraged for new development and redevelopment projects. The BNP offers additional guidance on the following:
1. signs shall be constructed of natural materials and in a color and style compatible with the area.
 2. advertising balloons shall not be permitted.
 3. illuminated signs should be discouraged, but where they exist, they shall follow state DOT and county standards.
 4. existing signs that are changed, altered, repaired (other than for lamps or ballasts) shall conform to sign regulations.
- P.12.9 Businesses in the BPA should be required to tightly contain garbage collection containers and screen containers from public view with landscaping or other appropriate barriers.

P.12.10 Flathead County, acting through the Planning Department and the BLUAC, should encourage Planned Unit Developments in order to have the discretion to vary road width requirements and require off-road shoulders of suitable load-bearing capacity where appropriate to preserve the “village” character.

P.12.11 Entrances set the tone for our community. Therefore, development at/or near the entrances to our community warrants particularly close scrutiny regarding adherence to these goals and policies.

Goal

G.13 Encourage well-designed service facilities, office space, and non-polluting industries that will add revenues to the economic base, without encouraging sprawl.

Policy

P.13.1 Encourage small-scale resort facilities, such as Bed & Breakfast establishments, country inns, and restaurants in appropriately zoned areas.

P.13.2 Development approval procedures should have regulatory time limits.

Goal

G.14 Encourage sustainable enterprises based upon renewable resources and protect these resources for the long-term future.

Policy

P.14.1 Development within natural hazard areas, such as fire, earthquake and steep slopes, shall mitigate the risk of injury, first to human life and second to property by limiting density in those areas. (See Map 4-Steep Slopes, for topographical detail and location of fault line at base of Swan Range)

P.14.2 Water usage shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws.

P.14.3 Development that causes or otherwise precipitates extensive filling, excavating, or altering the landscape, should submit a plan specifying:

1. the intended use of the developed property
2. a date by which the project will be completed, and
3. specific proposals for the restoration of the affected areas.

Flathead County should adopt procedures for reclamation bonds to mitigate these issues. Such bonds would be a prerequisite for approval.

Goal

G.15 Encourage landscaping and architectural styling suited to the particular site and area.

Policy

P.15.1 The design of commercial structures should conform to community standards. The design of commercial structures should not include false fronts and façades, particularly where the structure is visible from the side.

- P.15.2 New commercial buildings adjacent to highways shall provide a landscaped buffer zone between the buildings and the highway. Parking areas shall be paved. Parking should be in the rear.
- P.15.3 Landscaping and approved sidewalks should be a component of new commercial development.
- P.15.4 Landscaping should be appropriate and characteristic of the area.
- P.15.5 Commercial buildings should have permanent foundations.
- P.15.6 Franchise establishments shall be designed and constructed to conform to the “village” character.

Goal

- G.16 Encourage the use of frontage roads to combine highway access and minimize traffic problems.

Policy

- P.16.1 Commercial development creating 3,000 square feet of commercial space or entailing 3 or more buildings should include frontage road(s) providing access to commercial activities while minimizing the impact on public roadways.

Residential Development

Goal

- G.17 Accommodate increased growth through development that harmonizes with and enhances the natural environment, and protects the wildlife habitat.

Policy

- P.17.1 Development should be located to maximize the advantage taken of existing infrastructure and minimize the demand for additional infrastructure, such as roads or road improvements, and expansion of utilities.
- P.17.2 Developers should be required to remit to the appropriate agency the costs of public facilities, as defined in MCA 7-6-1601 sub-section 7 et. seq. (2005), for new, expanded, or modified development, where upgrades or expansion is required due to impact. Consistent with Section 7-6-1601, et seq., MCA, this assessment should include costs associated with impacts on Bigfork district public facilities.
- P.17.3 All development shall include a system of managing storm water runoff.
- P.17.4 Development should include sidewalks or bike, foot, and cart paths in accordance with Flathead County Subdivision Regulations.
- P.17.5 Where necessary infrastructure is not yet available, development shall be phased, with pace tied to the availability of infrastructure.
- P.17.6 All new multi-family residential development shall include on-site and off-street parking.

P.17.7 Subdivisions with any lot one acre or less should provide public water and sewer facilities or private treatment plants.

P.17.8 All developments should provide alternative fire exit routes.

P.17.9 Development approval procedures should have regulatory time limits.

Goal

G.18 Encourage development that maintains and promotes access to public areas and resources that have traditionally been open to the community. **(See Map 8-Parks and Recreation Sites)**

Policy

P.18.1 Encourage developers to provide open space within residential developments..

P.18.2 Open space, trails, and other public areas should be located adjacent to or as continuation of existing or planned open spaces.

Goal

G.19 Encourage development to follow an overall design that is consistent with the nature, quality, and density of surrounding development.

Policy

P.19.1 In residential areas of any lot size of one acre or less or in areas zoned R-1 or RC-1; utilize county zoning to prevent on street parking of large trucks, RVs, or heavy equipment. This does not apply to approved recreational vehicle parks.

P.19.2 Flathead County, acting through the Planning Department and the BLUAC, should encourage Planned Unit Developments ~~in order to have the discretion to vary road width requirements and require off-road shoulders of suitable load-bearing capacity where appropriate to preserve the “village” character.~~

Goal

G.20 Promote cluster development, using existing county zoning as a tool, to provide attractive residential communities that leave significant, commonly accessible open space, paying particular attention to natural features and constraints.

Policy

P.20.1 Development in areas near or including wildlife habitat and other sensitive areas should cluster density and maintain open space. **(See Map 7- Environmental Constraints)**

Goal

G.21 Promote development that provides a compatible mix of housing types and price ranges.

Policy

P.21.1 Mixed use development, combining commercial and residential uses, shall be considered.

~~P.21.2 Discourage Class B & C manufactured homes (as defined in the Flathead County Zoning Regulations) from areas where permanent homes and/or commercial uses are predominant.~~

Environmental Concerns

Goal

G.22 Insure a social and economic balance of health, safety and welfare while preserving the natural environment of the BPA.

Policy

P.22.1 Establish identifiable “village areas” separated by natural elements of open space and low-density land use. Appropriate zoning shall be utilized.

P.22.2 Consistent with Flathead County Zoning Regulations, outdoor lighting shall limit light pollution while still maintaining safety.

P.22.3 Development should include plans for dust control on unpaved roads.

P.22.4 When development requires an extension of telephone or electrical service, lines should be installed underground.

P.22.5 County garbage collection areas should be screened or bermed from view.

P.22.6 BPA should establish standards to minimize visual and noise pollution. The use of compression brakes should be prohibited.

Goal

G.23 Preserve view sheds as well as stream and wildlife habitats while encouraging the use of appropriate timber management practices that respect timber harvesting opportunities, reduce fuel loading, and foster healthy forests.

Policy

P.23.1 Development should encourage preservation of ~~the horizon~~ *natural mountain, ridgeline, or other prominent topographical horizons.*

P.23.2 Timber cutting in highly visible areas and along public roadways should leave a buffer zone of healthy timber.

Goal

G.24 Encourage development to use appropriate practices to preserve water quality, especially where affected by street runoff and septic systems, prevent erosion, control weeds, and promote fire safety in timbered areas. **(See Map 2-Ground Water Depth and Map 3-100 Year Flood Plain)**

Policy

P.24.1 Identify and protect all wetlands in the BPA.

P.24.2 Construction in 100 year flood plains, wetlands, and natural drainage areas shall not be permitted.

- P.24.3 Development should provide appropriate setbacks, buffers, and other mitigation measures to protect lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, flood plains, and other waterways from adverse effects of development.
- P.24.4 Development should contain measures to control and minimize pollution (air, water, and ground), erosion, soil maintenance, sediments, fire, flooding, and hillside damage. Development should preserve prime soil.
- P.24.5 Development shall protect the surface and sub-surface waters from pollution and depletion through appropriate wastewater management systems and non-source pollution controls.
- P.24.6 Development of areas containing critical animal and or plant habitat should include a plan for mitigating the adverse effects of the development.
- P.24.7 Development should limit the introduction of noxious weeds during construction and restore any land or vegetation damaged during construction to its pre-construction condition or better.
- P.24.8 Developers should remove and thin all overgrown, dead and dying timber, and other fuels by prescribed guidelines to mitigate fire potential. (Reference Flathead County Subdivision Regulations, Appendix L)

Goal

- G.25 Utilize county zoning to protect environmentally sensitive open spaces, scenic views, and natural habitat in the BPA through use of buffer zones, setbacks, and creative planning techniques.

Policy

- P.25.1 Development shall adhere to Flathead County setback requirements.
- P.25.2 The BLUAC shall make these development characteristics essential considerations during the approval process.

Goal

- G.26 Promote and encourage the development of public access to waterways and state and federal lands.

Policy

- P.26.1 Development should not limit existing *legally established* public access to public waterways, state or federal land.

Goal

- G.27 Preserve for the public use and enjoyment of areas adjacent to the Swan River from the Swan River road bridge to the power plant in Bigfork, including Sliter Park. These areas, also known as the “Wild Mile” and the “Nature Trail”, are of incalculable value to the community and should be preserved in their pristine state.

Policy

- P.27.1 These areas should be preserved in an unspoiled state.

- P.27.2 Support and encourage all efforts, both public and private, to secure in perpetuity the public's access to these areas.

PART VI - LOCAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Summary – Conditions and Trends

The BPA, is an unincorporated area of Flathead County, and therefore, does not have a local governing body. However, issues of growth and development within the BPA are reviewed by the BLUAC, an elected committee of residents within the BPA, who report directly to the County.

In view of the expected growth in the BPA, and the proposed growth in the Somers and Lakeside areas, additional law enforcement resources will be required to provide the level of service expected in the BPA. Likewise, fire safety and ambulance service is being impacted by population increases coupled with a decline in the number of volunteer fire and medical professionals. Flathead County must provide the citizens of the BPA with adequate safety resources and disaster planning.

Despite the current rate of population growth, the education system has not experienced an influx of students. However, the 2005 Bigfork survey suggests there is a need for after-school recreation facilities and activities for Bigfork youth. Current social services are considered adequate; however, the growing and aging population in the BPA will require higher levels of medical care, age-specific housing, and social services.

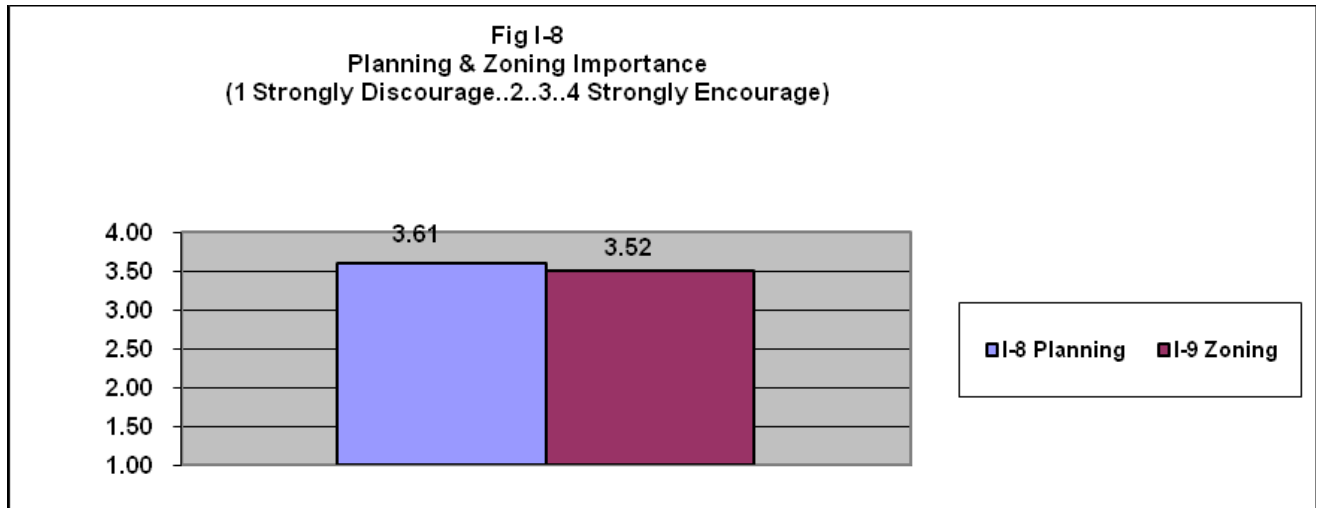
Local Government

Historically, the Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork, formerly the Bigfork Development Company, has performed a variety of community service functions normally performed by a local government entity.

In 1990, Bigfork citizens formed the BSC to gather community input on creating the 1993 Bigfork Area Land Use Plan. The plan, which was approved by the County Commissioners, recommended the creation of a local advisory board to review applications and proposals for growth and development projects within the BPA. The BLUAC was created as a seven-member, elected committee comprised of residents of the BPA. The BLUAC acts as a liaison between Bigfork citizens and Flathead County in providing useful and beneficial information utilizing citizen input concerning issues of orderly growth and development within the BPA. On October 19, 2004, the BSC was reconstituted for the purpose of revising and updating the BNP, an effort culminating with the publication of this document. Upon approval of the 2006 Bigfork Neighborhood Plan by the County Commissioners, the BLUAC will implement the Plan as a guiding document for growth and development in the BPA. The BSC will continue its focus on community planning issues and work closely with the BLUAC and other local service organizations. The BPA relies on the County to provide for public health, safety, and the general welfare of its citizens.

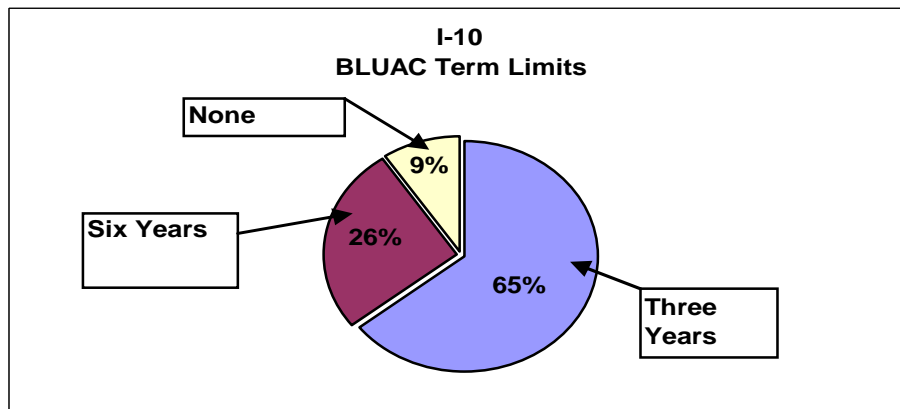
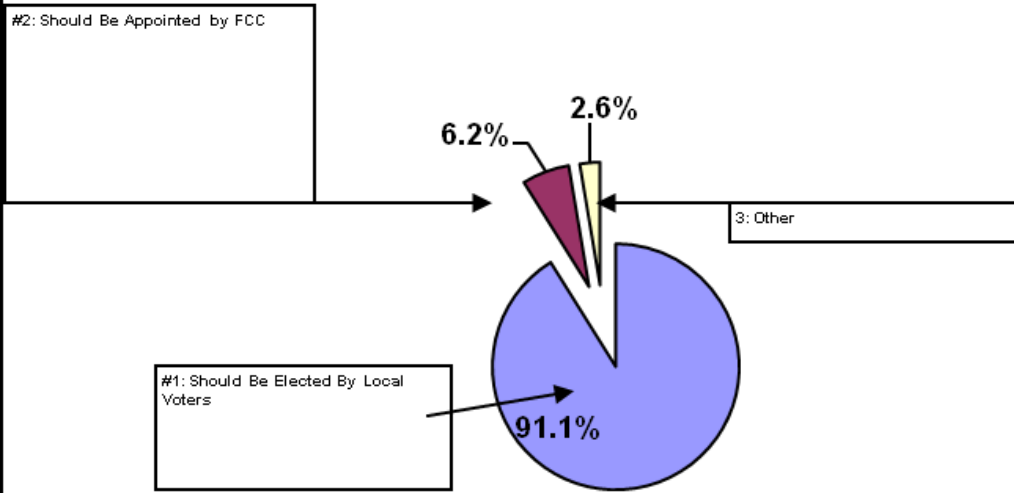
Excerpts from BPA 2005 Survey

As is clear from the graph below, respondents expressed very positive support for the notion that planning and zoning are essential steps in ensuring a positive future for Bigfork. It is noteworthy that the response (3.61) to question I-8 (planning) received the highest score of all the questions asked in the survey.



Figures I-19 and I-10 represent respondents' views on defined aspects of the existing zoning and planning process. Consistent with the historical present of the Boston Tea Party and the more recent 1993 Bigfork Master Plan, respondents expressed overwhelming support (91.1%) for having members of the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee (BLUAC) elected to office instead of the current method of appointment by the Flathead County Commissioners. This figure is up considerably from the 1993 survey result (General #5) of seventy-one percent (71%) favoring elected BLUAC members. Additionally, 65% of respondents felt that the BLUAC members should have three-year terms with 26% supporting six-year term limits.

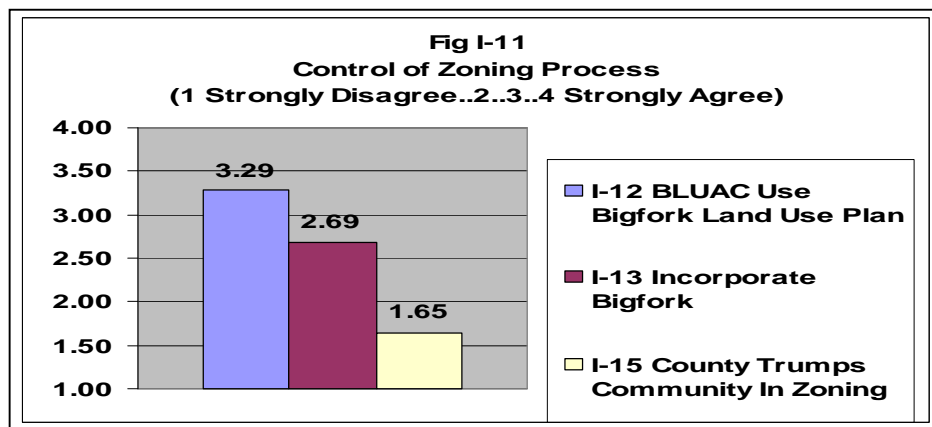
**Fig I-9
Sourcing For
BLUAC Membership**



In large measure, as a result of the above survey information, the BSC initiated a By-law revision process mandating that BLUAC members be elected rather than appointed to their positions. This effort was approved by the FCC and the first elections were held in May 2006.

Questions I-12, I-13 and I-15, as depicted in Figure I-11, continue with the planning theme. Respondents registered strong support (3.29) for requiring the BLUAC to use the Bigfork Master Plan as the guiding document when making planning and zoning determinations. Support for incorporation of Bigfork as a means to more thoroughly control the planning and zoning process

was modestly positive (2.69), but the median score in this area was a more positive 3.0. There is very little support (1.65) for the idea that county zoning determinations should take precedent over the planning and zoning preferences of the local community. Here, too, we find consistent views between overall survey participants and those who may be regarded as closer to this particular issue. Of those respondents who lived in areas A or B (generally inclusive of potential incorporation boundaries), survey results were marginally different on the need to use the Bigfork Master Plan (3.35) as a guiding document and support for incorporation of Bigfork (2.7). On the question of whether or not county zoning should trump community zoning, residents of areas A and/or B recorded 1.64—a statistically insignificant difference from the 1.65 expressed by the survey respondents at large.



Taken separately, these responses demonstrate very strong support for community based planning and zoning similar to the 1993 result for a related question (General #10) in which seventy-seven percent (77%) of those surveyed favored area zoning. Though the question dealing with the incorporation of Bigfork posted only a modestly positive response, it is compelling to note that under the Constitution for the State of Montana, community as opposed to county based planning and zoning can only be achieved through the political mechanism of an incorporated community or through cooperation with county commissioners who are responsive to the community. On the other hand, similar to the earlier developmental questions, respondents were asked to give their views without any access to cost information. What, if any, the additional tax burden would be for incorporation, and whether or not area citizens would be willing to pay it, will need to await further exploration.

Question I-14 asked what the incorporation boundaries of Bigfork should be. Three-hundred seventy-nine (379) respondents provided comments with forty-three (43) (11%) providing negative comments on the wisdom of incorporating, or at least asking for cost information before deciding. The actual suggested boundaries covered the wide range of options, to include telephone prefix 837, postal code 59911, Bigfork Village – and most every combination in between imaginable.

In response to these survey results, the BSC engaged a professional consultant from the Montana State University Local Government Center and undertook a comprehensive review of relevant factors related to incorporation of Bigfork. The study group concluded that

incorporation would provide local control over planning and zoning in a three square mile area. However, the projected property tax increase was 27%. Further, some BSC members feared that incorporation would reduce Bigfork's volunteer spirit. As a result of these current circumstances, the BSC unanimously voted against pursuing incorporation.

Public Safety

Flathead County Sheriff's Department

The Flathead County Sheriff's Department has the primary law enforcement responsibility within the BPA. The department has one deputy assigned to Bigfork, Lakeside and Somers on a 24 hour-a-day basis, seven days a week. The deputy's patrol includes Bigfork and Ferndale (north of Highway 209). On occasion, the Lake County Sheriff's Department assists the Flathead County Sheriff's Department along the southern border on emergency calls or major situations. Bigfork High School has one School Resource Officer assigned on a full-time basis.

State and Federal Agencies

In addition to local law enforcement, the BPA is also served by state and federal agencies. The Montana Highway Patrol has the primary responsibility for traffic enforcement and investigating accidents on state highways. Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks department is responsible for related law enforcement activities on state lands, lakes, and waterways within the BPA. The U.S. Forest Service has an office in Bigfork which provides law enforcement services on federal land and in national forests within the Swan Lake Ranger District. Although the agencies are comfortable with their current staffing level, they feel additional personnel would improve their overall effectiveness.

Crime Statistics and Trends

The Sheriff's Department was unable to provide specific crime statistics or response times for calls in the BPA without performing a labor intensive paper and computer search. However, they were able to provide the total number of calls for service received in the BPA, showing a substantial increase over the past five years. This trend has also occurred across the Flathead Valley. The total calls for service received from the BPA were as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of calls</u>	<u>Percent of increase</u>
2001	1776	
2002	2003	+12.75%
2003	2226	+11.00 %
2004	2473	+11.00 %
2005	2604	+05.25 %

It is apparent that the increase in calls for service is consistent with the increase in population. This trend is also evident with the return of seasonal residents and the influx of tourists during the spring and summer seasons. During July and August, the number of calls typically increases by 58%.

Fire Safety and Medical Response

The Bigfork Fire Department and Bigfork Volunteer Ambulance are world-class organizations; however, they are experiencing the effects of the community's population growth. In 2001, both were staffed entirely by volunteers.

Today, the Bigfork Fire Department consists of 23 volunteer firefighters and three fulltime employees. It serves an area larger than the BPA, stretching from Condon to Creston and Somers. The fire chief describes the current staffing level as "minimally adequate." A declining number of volunteers could result in decreased response times and level of service.

The Bigfork Volunteer Ambulance serves an area ranging on Hwy 35 north to LaBrandt Road and south to mile marker 16, on Hwy 83 south to mile marker 65, and on Hwy 82 west to the "S" curve. The organization is dependant on donations and service fees and has two response vehicles purchased with funds raised by the Bigfork community. There is no federal or state support provided. One paid paramedic is on call during the day, and 23 volunteers answer night calls. In 2005, there were 480 calls for assistance, a number rising steadily as the population increases.

As the BPA's population expands, especially during the summer, both organizations will have a need for more paid staffing and separate quarters for paid response staff. There is a general lack of awareness as to how emergency services will respond to disasters in the BPA.

Library and The Arts

Library

The Bigfork library is a branch of the Flathead County Library System. The library is open 29 hours a week and has one three-quarter time staff person, plus 2 additional part-time staff members. On average, approximately 800 books are checked out per month. Winter usage is less than summertime. In fiscal year 2006, an average of 1,773 items (children's and adult's books, videos, and audio recordings) were checked out each month. Public computer classes are regularly offered, as well as a weekly story time.

With an interior space of only 1,440 square feet, the library is feeling the results of expanding growth in Bigfork. A new location and larger building is definitely in the future for the library in order to maintain its present quality of service and book availability. A library space-planning consultant has studied all of the Flathead County libraries and recommends that the Bigfork Branch be expanded from the current 1,440 square feet to 4,000 square feet by 2025. The County Library Board is actively involved in searching for a library site that has adequate space for a building that has easy access to the schools and new subdivisions. With a new facility, the Library System hopes to increase open hours and staff full time equivalent.

Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts

The Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts is a 432-seat theater located in the Village presenting live theater throughout the year. Some of the performances showcase children's theater, the Bigfork Community Players, and other musical events and concerts, and a busy summer schedule.

Bigfork Art and Cultural Center

The Bigfork Art and Cultural Center provides a facility dedicated to the appreciation of arts and crafts through classes, education exhibits, and workshops. The Center's mission is to attract visitors and collectors by showcasing the works of both established and amateur artists and craftsmen. The Center's goal is to create a dedicated facility to present the history and uniqueness of Bigfork and the surrounding area, and stimulate tourism.

Education

The BPA has two public school districts, Bigfork and Swan River. The Bigfork School District operates an elementary, middle and high school. The Swan River School District operates an elementary and middle school. There are no private schools in the BPA. In addition, 10% of students from the Bigfork District are either home-schooled, attend one of the eight Kalispell private schools, or attend Kalispell public schools.

Bigfork student enrollment projection studies have been completed to the year 2030. National Census Bureau statistics predict a general trend of enrollment decline in K-12 school age children. Montana is expected to follow this national trend of gradual decline in student population. However, despite current and projected declines in school enrollment, facility constraints will continue. Implementation of mandated federal and state school programs requires dedicated classroom space which the schools find difficult to create within existing facilities. An increase of 25 new high school students and 25 to 30 new elementary students would create a capacity problem in the Bigfork District schools.

The current growth trend in Bigfork's housing should not alter Bigfork student enrollment. Bigfork's high real estate prices are not traditionally conducive to drawing families with school aged children into our community.

Area School Enrollment Trends

SCHOOLS UTILIZED BY BIGFORK SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENTS	10 year ENROLLMENT (INCREASE/ DECREASE %)	PEAK ENROLLMENT YEARS
Bigfork public school K-8	Decline of 15%	1996-1998
Swan River public school K-8	Decline of 1%	1996 & 2003-2004
Private K-8 (Kalispell) St. Matthews Stillwater Christian Trinity Lutheran Home School	Increase of 72% Increase of 9% Decline of 2% Decline of 13%	Gradual yearly increase over past 10 years 2005 2001-2002 1996-1997
Bigfork High School	Decline of 1%	1997 & 2002
Kalispell High Schools: Stillwater Christian Flathead High School Home School	Decline of 18% Increase of 6% Increase of 113%	1996 & 2003 2003 & 2005 2000

Data provided by Russ Kinser, Superintendent of Bigfork School District.

Bigfork School District Bond Issue

SCHOOL DISTRICT	AVERAGE ENROLLMENT	CURRENT BONDS/ LEVIES	PROSPECTIVE BONDS	CURRENT BONDING CAPACITY
Bigfork Elem/Middle Schools	278	None	Possible for school expansion and operating costs	\$11 million
Bigfork High School	378	\$200,000 for heating unit/satisfied 6/2006	Possible for school expansion and operating costs.	
Swan River School	155	\$1.2 million for gym, music, art rooms & stage	None- AT CAPACITY	None-No levies for a few years

The Bigfork School District does not have enough bonding capacity to build a new school while paying operating costs for the existing schools. Renovation and expansion of current school facilities are currently being explored. Swan River School has recently completed two school additions. The first \$1.2 million bond built a cafeteria/multi-purpose room and the second \$1 million bond funded a gymnasium, art and music room, and stage addition. Swan River School is currently bonded to full capacity and does not expect any new levies over the next few years. School consolidation of the Bigfork and Swan River elementary and middle schools has been considered throughout the years.

Health Care and Social Services

Health Care

Various types of health care are available in the BPA. There are two medical doctors and two dentists in Bigfork, as well as two physiotherapists, an optometrist and three chiropractors. An acupuncturist, homeopath, and several massage therapists also provide health support. Lessons in yoga, T'ai Chi and other forms of body and mind training in support of good mental and physical health are available at private clubs.

Health care providers in the BPA disagree about the adequacy of medical personnel and facilities to be found within the BPA. While the ratio of primary care physicians is twice the national average (two MDs and a nurse practitioner for an estimated full-time population of 2,250 in 2005), personal preference is limited in Bigfork proper. Extensive medical facilities (hospital, urgent care, free clinic) are available in Kalispell. Transportation from Bigfork to Kalispell is available by ambulance or helicopter. These services can meet emergency needs with specialized lifesaving equipment but with very high operational costs.

The Lake View Care Center in Bigfork is an 80-bed facility designed to accommodate the elderly or disabled who can no longer live at home. Seventy percent of these beds are occupied at present. A small Alzheimer's wing in the building can accommodate 13 residents. Based upon the current population, the administrator sees no need for an expanded facility now or in the immediate future.

Responses to the 2005 Bigfork Survey gave strong support to the importance of assisted living structures and senior housing in the area. The administrator of the Lake View Care Center agreed that there was a need for such housing. As the population continues to age, there will be a need for assisted living facilities. The community needs a full range of housing from independent senior housing, minimal care, like assisted living, to long term care, such as Lake View Care Center.

Respondents also indicated a general awareness that an aging population will require diverse and augmented public services to ensure the health and safety of Bigfork citizens. However, the needs of this group were given only moderate priority on the survey, even though 31% of the respondents were 65 and older, and 33 % fell within the 55-64 age groups. Those who focused on health issues of the elderly indicated the importance for more health care services and an urgent care facility.

Social Services

The Bigfork Senior Citizens' Center and the Bigfork Food Pantry (a satellite of the Flathead Food Bank) provide food and other services to those who need support. The Food Pantry serves Bigfork area families living at 150% of the federal poverty level, and on a continuous or temporary basis. (Federal poverty guidelines: income for a family of four is \$19,350 annually.) Currently, the Pantry is serving 19 households on a regular basis and many more as their situations change. Because the operation is outgrowing its present space, and the owners of the building may require full use of it for their business in the future, the Pantry is urgently seeking another, larger facility.

The Senior Citizens' Center offers hot meals; diners pay what they can afford. Funds collected go to the county food services in Kalispell, an organization that provides 6,000 hot meals a day for senior citizen facilities and Meals-on-Wheels. The service is available to all county residents in need at a cost to Flathead County of \$4.00 per meal. Other services, such as flu shots and driving classes, can also be had through the Senior Center in Bigfork. Based on the current population, the manager does not feel that a new building is necessary at this time.

Survey respondents support the idea of some type of public transport. Eagle Transit offers such a service now on Thursdays for those who wish or need to go to Kalispell. This operation is supported by the County Agency for Aging.

Survey results indicate that Bigfork youth, ages six to 17, comprise 30% of Bigfork residents. Survey respondents show some concern over the lack of after-school recreation facilities for this population. Survey suggestions include ball fields, a recreation center, and playground facilities.

A limited but growing number of programs are currently available for youngsters. Although the grade schools and middle school have no after-school programs, the Bigfork High School sponsors night classes where a paid instructor teaches math, reading and social studies, and has an ongoing mentoring program. In addition, music groups meet before and after school.

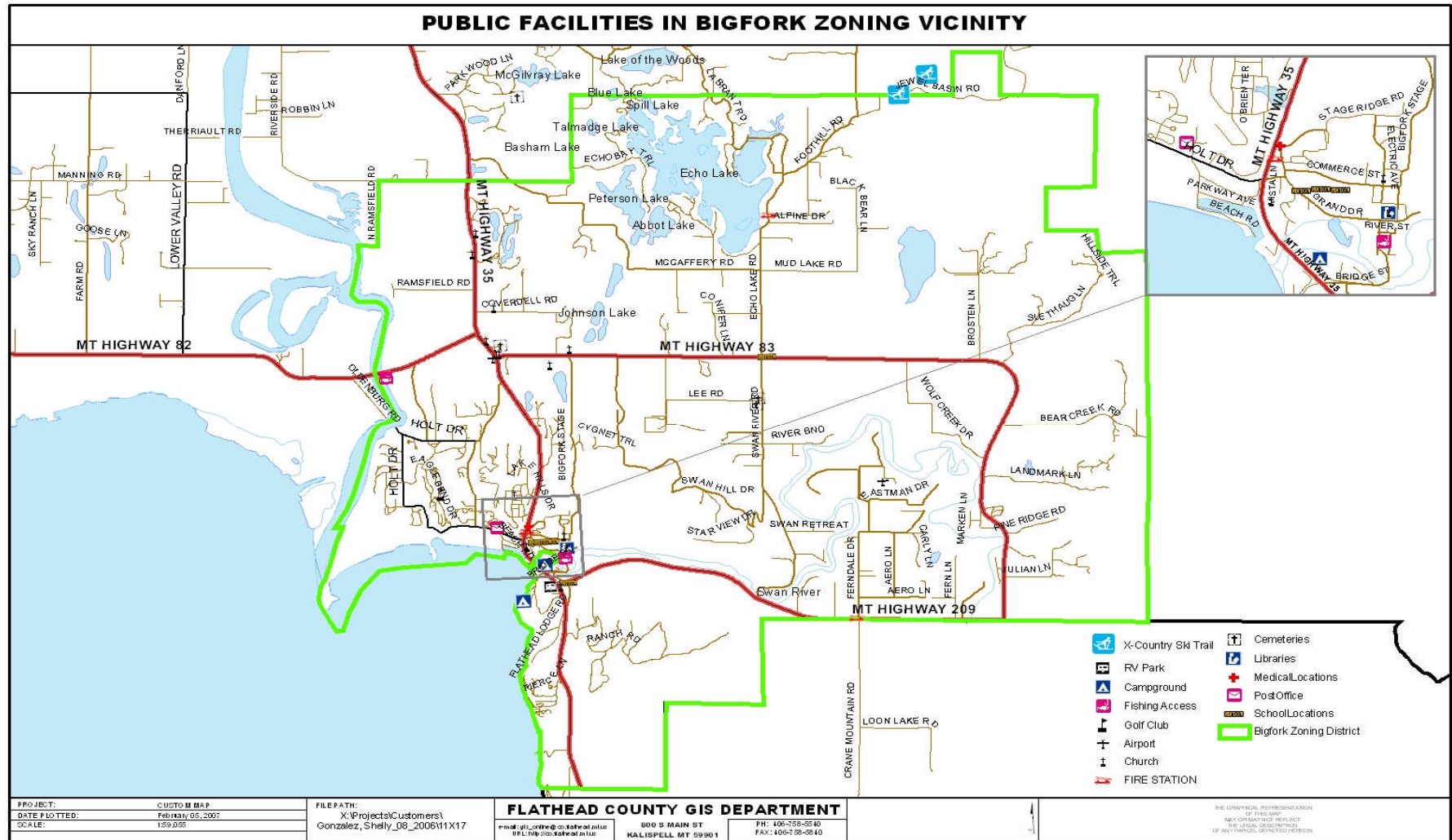
There are six registered childcare facilities in Bigfork, some of which provide pre-school training. All are private businesses, but are eligible to receive state aid for children of low-income families, and food aid through USDA programs.

Churches and private clubs also offer activities for students. Most of the 12 churches in the Bigfork area sponsor faith-related youth functions on a regular basis and two have youth ministers on staff. Students can participate in team games at the Montana Athletic Club in swimming, tennis, and children's basketball for a fee. Young Life, an international, non-denominational Christian organization, brings students together in various after-school and evening events.

Community Center

We hope as our community grows, resources will be devoted to the creation of a community center. Such a facility should meet the needs of our young people as well as providing a venue to community events and local administrative services.

Map 11



Local and Social Services Goals and Policies

Goal Statement:

The Bigfork community, through the BSC, will coordinate its efforts with Flathead County to anticipate, identify and respond to the community's safety and service needs.

Goal

G.28 Encourage all public and private service providers to work together for the common good of the community.

Policy

P.28.1 Facilitate communication and cooperation with all local administrative agencies and service providers.

P.28.2 Facilitate communication and cooperation with local volunteer organizations.

Goal

G.29 Foster community service improvements and expansion consistent with area growth.

Policy

P.29.1 Support library services to accommodate the needs of the growing population.

P.29.2 Support community efforts to purchase the Swan River Nature Trail.

P.29.3 Public utility service land and wetlands should be considered for public parklands.

P.29.4 Encourage cooperation with local agencies to enhance existing emergency planning.

P.29.5 Encourage continued community focus on facilities dedicated to culture and arts.

P.29.6 Encourage development of a full range of senior housing to include independent senior housing and assisted living facilities in close proximity to community and public services.

PART VII - TRANSPORTATION

Summary – Condition and Trends

In the BPA, the road network has expanded adequately to serve the existing developed areas. Montana state highways (35, 82, and 83) account for approximately 17 miles and are maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). Flathead County's Road and Bridge Department is responsible for maintaining public county roads within the BPA. The transportation network throughout the BPA provides connectivity to commercial areas, schools and public services and adequately moves traffic without noticeable congestion. However, increasing population and new development in the BPA has contributed to degrading road conditions in numerous locations. Road maintenance and new road development must be of a high quality to protect residents and visitors and not impair the scenic qualities within the BPA.

Alternative modes of transportation, such as pedestrian, bicycle, and cart paths are encouraged in the BPA, and will be supported along existing transportation corridors and between future areas of residential and commercial development.

Existing Roads and Conditions

Montana highways provide adequate north - south, east - west transportation routes throughout the BPA.

- Highway 209 is a paved arterial route which ties the southern boundary of the BPA to Highway 35.
- Holt Drive connects the Eagle Bend area to Highway 35.
- Paved collector roads provide residential areas with easy access to highways and paved arterial roads.
- Gravel collector roads such as Bigfork Stage Road and Swan Hill Drive are experiencing increased traffic due to area development. Flathead County should consider paving them to reduce dust, which pollutes our air, waterways, and lakes.
- Paved local roads are present in the numerous subdivisions throughout the BPA, such as Bigfork Village, Eagle Bend, Crestview, and Peaceful Drive.
- Gravel roads are few, but are more prevalent in the agricultural areas of the BPA, such as Lee Road and Wolf Creek Drive.

Transportation issues that affect the BPA, but which the community has no local control over, do create issues of safety.

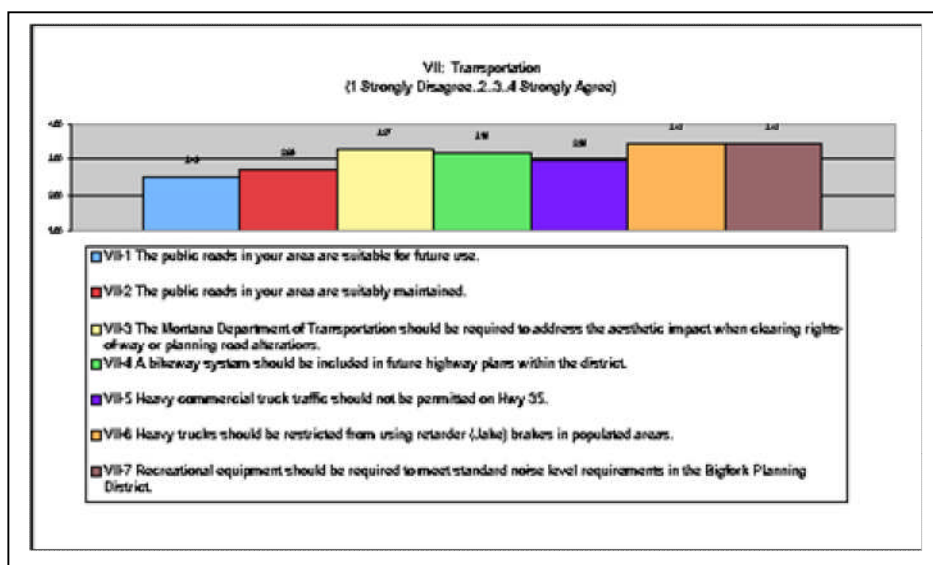
- State funds are provided for specific projects; maintenance of paved roads takes priority over unpaved roads.
- Dust from unpaved roads is a major source of pollution to local waterways and lakes.
- State and county signage along BPA transportation corridors is deemed adequate for safety.
- State and county roads contain easements but vary regarding buffers.

Traffic counts within the BPA by Flathead County Road and Bridge Department were conducted in May 2003 and September 2004, the results of which do not indicate any significant traffic increases along county roads during that limited comparison period. Since that time significant growth has occurred in the area and it is reasonable to conclude these results significantly under represent current traffic conditions within the BPA.

The conditions of the roadways within the BPA received significant comment in the 2005 Bigfork Survey, with respondents citing deteriorating conditions in numerous locations.

Excerpts from BPA 2005 Survey

Here too we find consistent support for protecting the serenity of Bigfork and the surrounding area. Per Figure VII-1, consideration of aesthetics when planning roadways (3.27), incorporating a bikeway system in future highway plans (3.18), restricting commercial truck from use of Hwy 35 (2.98), prohibiting use of “retarder” (Jake) brakes in populated areas (3.43), and requiring recreational vehicles to stay within standard noise thresholds (3.43) all received positive support. The current road system (2.49) and provision for its maintenance was assessed (2.69) as adequate.



Despite the fact that respondents generally felt public roadways were generally suitable for future use (2.49 at Fig. VII-1, and suitably maintained (2.69 at Figure VII-1), several comments were made in these areas. Roads frequently cited as unsuitable:

Holt Drive, Bigfork Stage Road, Hwy 35, Chapman Hill Road, LaBrant Road, Ferndale Drive, Yenne Point Road, Hanging Rock Road, Echo Lake Road.

Not surprisingly, there is some similarity to the list of roads assessed as maintained most poorly: Hwy 35 (cited most frequently), Hwy 209, Chapman Hill Road, Holt Drive, Bigfork Village.

Many of the cited roads and streets have experienced significant traffic increases due to residential and commercial development. Specifically, Chapman Hill Road and Holt Drive have experienced significant road degradation due to heavy equipment utilized in construction projects throughout the Eagle Bend area. Flathead County reports that there is no capital improvement

budget for road repair and that they will not classify any road as substandard. Public safety may be at risk if roads are not well maintained throughout the BPA.

In addition to the shortage of public parking in Bigfork Village and the resulting safety issues created, parking congestion at the intersection of Highway 83 and Echo Lake Road/Swan River Road creates a public safety hazard. Additional public parking is necessary to mitigate pedestrian traffic at that intersection where the speed limit is 60 miles per hour during non-school hours.

Future Transportation

As future land use designations indicate, more suburban residential designations are located in the Bigfork Stage Road area. It is imperative that Bigfork Stage Road be widened and paved to county standards in order to accommodate the increased traffic, due to higher density development and help channel traffic around the Village. (See **Map 12-Road and Trail Network** and **Map 10-Future Land Use Map**)

In 2004, the engineering firm of Carter-Burgess, working with the Montana Highway Department and the greater Bigfork community, completed an Environmental Assessment that identified the “Preferred Alternative” for accomplishing the upgrade for Hwy 35. A portion of the report is quoted below and followed by a series of thirteen separate diagrams depicting the project. Figure 2-12 outlines the project’s overall scope and Figures B-1 through B-12 provide segment details.

A complete copy of the report is available at

http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/eis_ea/ea_bigfork.pdf. Note: Figure designations in this section are consistent with the cited Carter Burgess assessment and not the BNP.

Extract from Carter Burgess EA: Bigfork North & South STPP 52- 1(18)27 Control No. 4035, prepared for Montana Department of Transportation, June 2004.

Hwy 35 Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative was developed through a collaborative and interactive effort with the community and addresses many needs as described in Chapter One: Purpose & Need. The process was conducted according to the principles of Context Sensitive Design such that the Preferred Alternative: 1) Meets the transportation need; 2) Is compatible with the natural and built environment; and 3) Is an asset to the community. To identify a Preferred Alternative that is consistent with the context of the community, the community is described by the following statement:

The communities of Bigfork and the eastern shore of Flathead Lake are areas whose economy is based largely on the success of destination resort related business. People visit the area and use local goods and services largely due to the high quality scenic views, community, and environmental values of the forest land, mountains, village atmosphere, and Flathead Lake. As a critical transportation facility, MT-35 should complement and serve those values.

The Elements of the Preferred Alternative include:

- *Cross-sectional elements: traffic lanes, shoulders, clear zones, medians, ditches and slopes.*
- *Intersection treatments: traffic control measures, traffic signals, roundabouts, etc.*
- *Safety and operational improvements to geometric conditions, intersection configuration, and alignments are included to address specific areas of concern.*
- *Community Entry Treatments: measures to identify the entrances of the developed communities to the MT-35 traveler.*
- *Non-Motorized Facilities: multipurpose facilities, walkways and roadside treatments.*
- *A new Swan River Bridge.*
- *Supporting infrastructure elements. These elements are those required to support all the transportation features such as retaining walls, drainage features, etc.*

Maps on pages 63 through 74 depict the Preferred Alternative design of Highway 35 from Woods Bay through Bigfork to the junction with Highway 83.

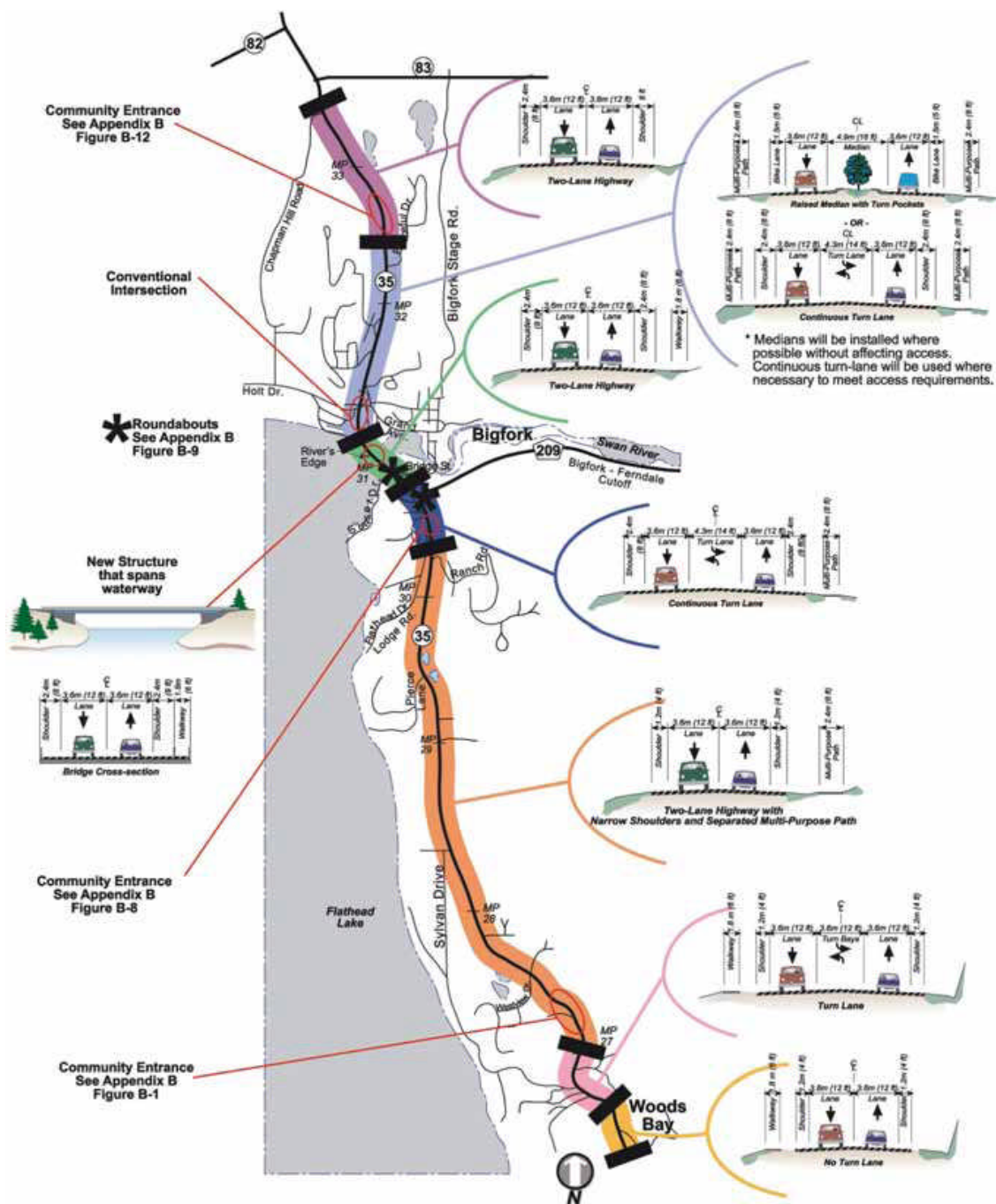
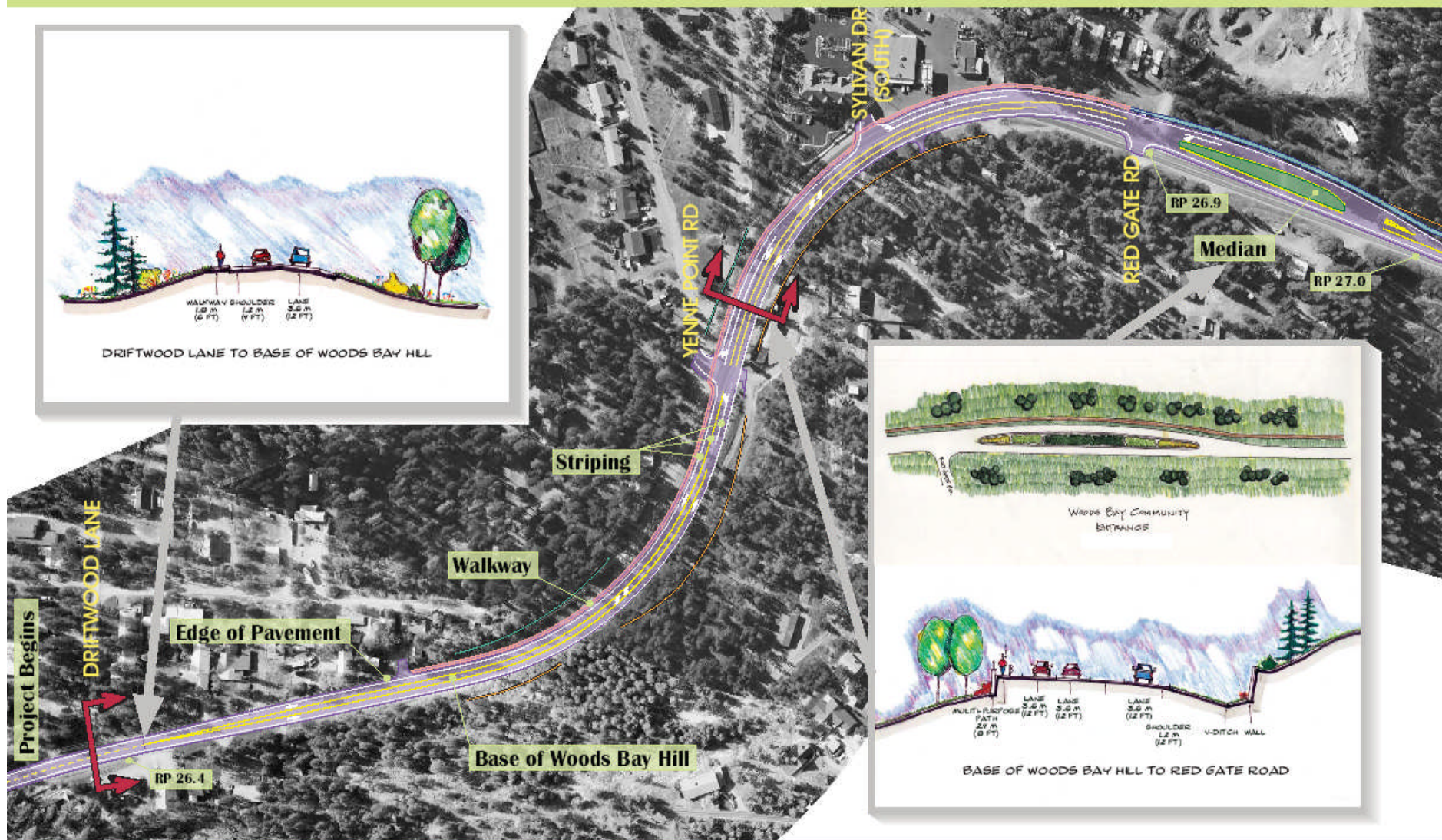


Figure 9-12



Fill Retaining Walls ———
Cut Retaining Walls ———

Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———
Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

Figure B-1
Preferred Alternative

T:230 003 (Design) / Project / group / hvc / EA 2003 / plan 1.FA.1.0

BIGFORK



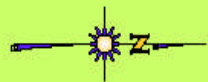
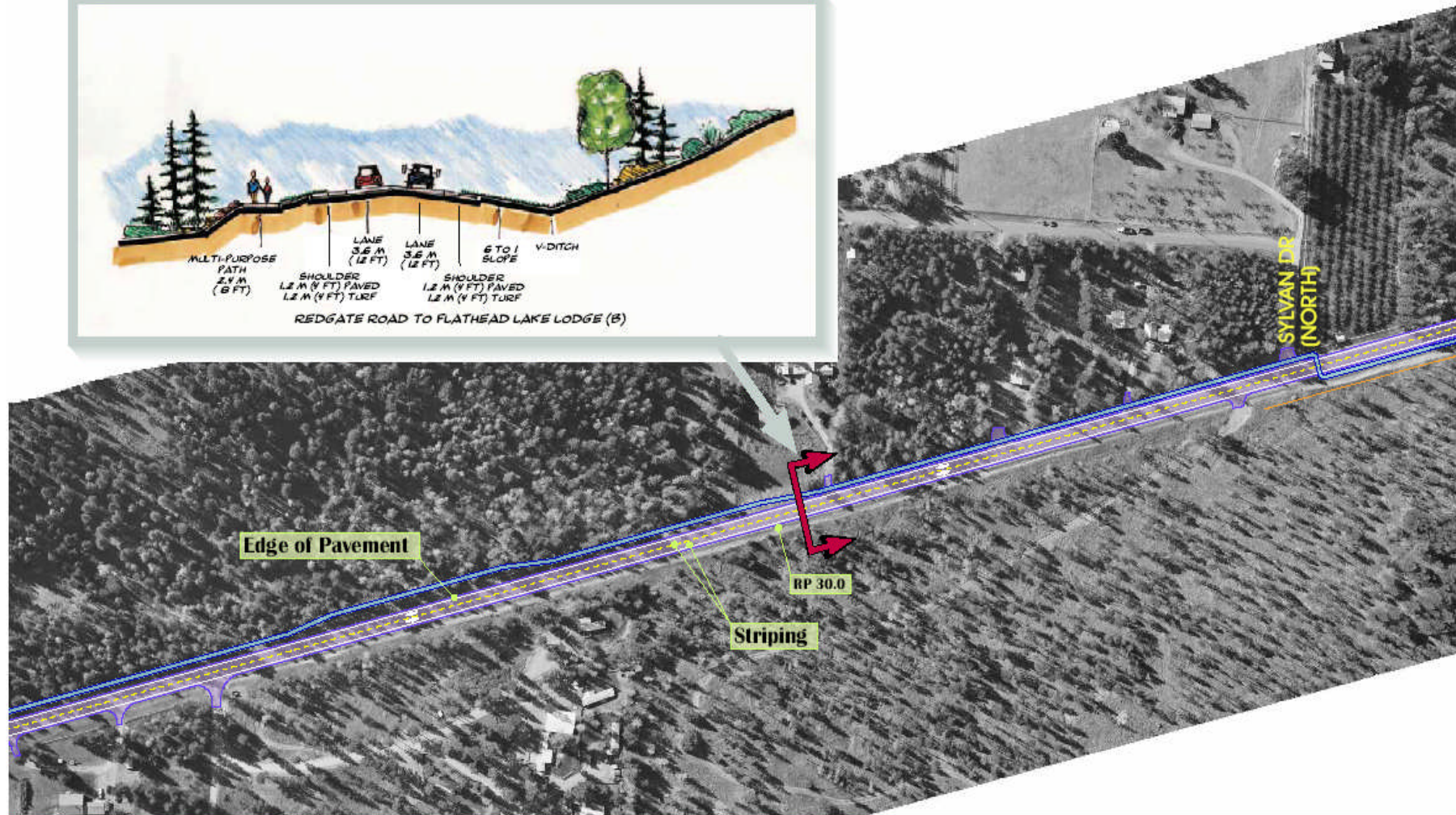
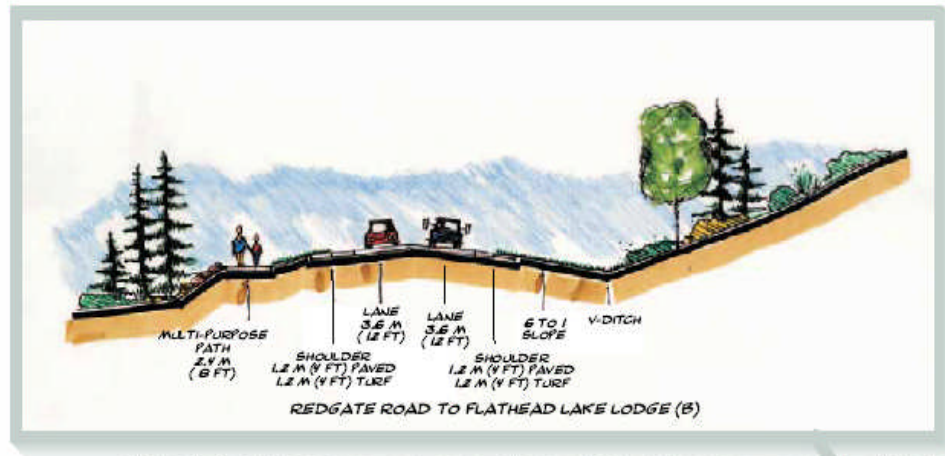
Fill Retaining Walls ———
Cut Retaining Walls ———

Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———
Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

Figure B-3
Preferred Alternative

T:\230003\Design\Freehand_graphics\EA2003\plan.3.FB.1.0

BIGFORK



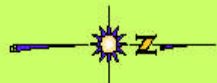
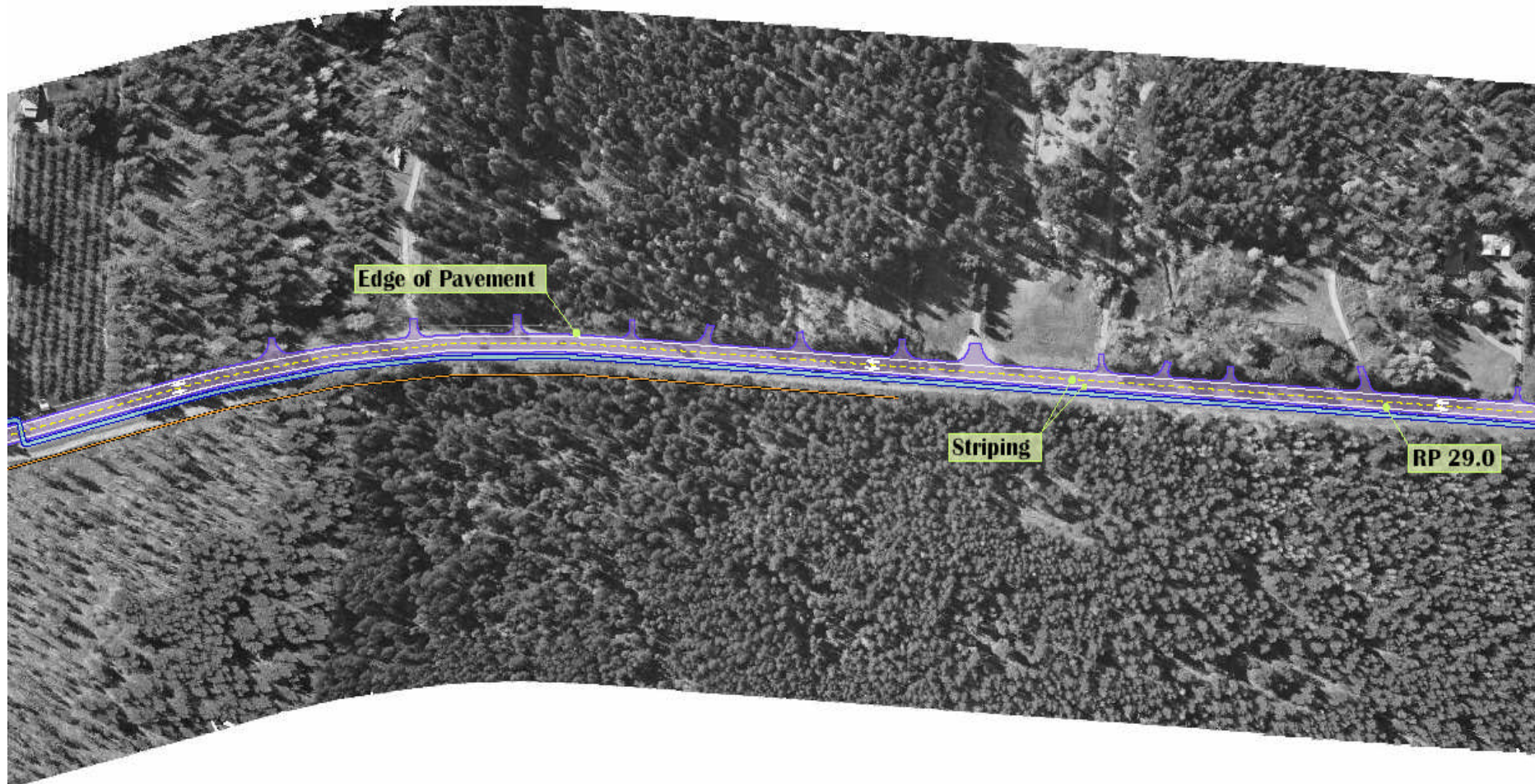
Fill Retaining Walls ———
Cut Retaining Walls ———

Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———
Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

Figure B-4
Preferred Alternative

T330003Design\Freshend_graphics\EA2003\plan4.fh10

BIGFORK



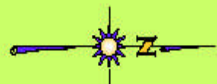
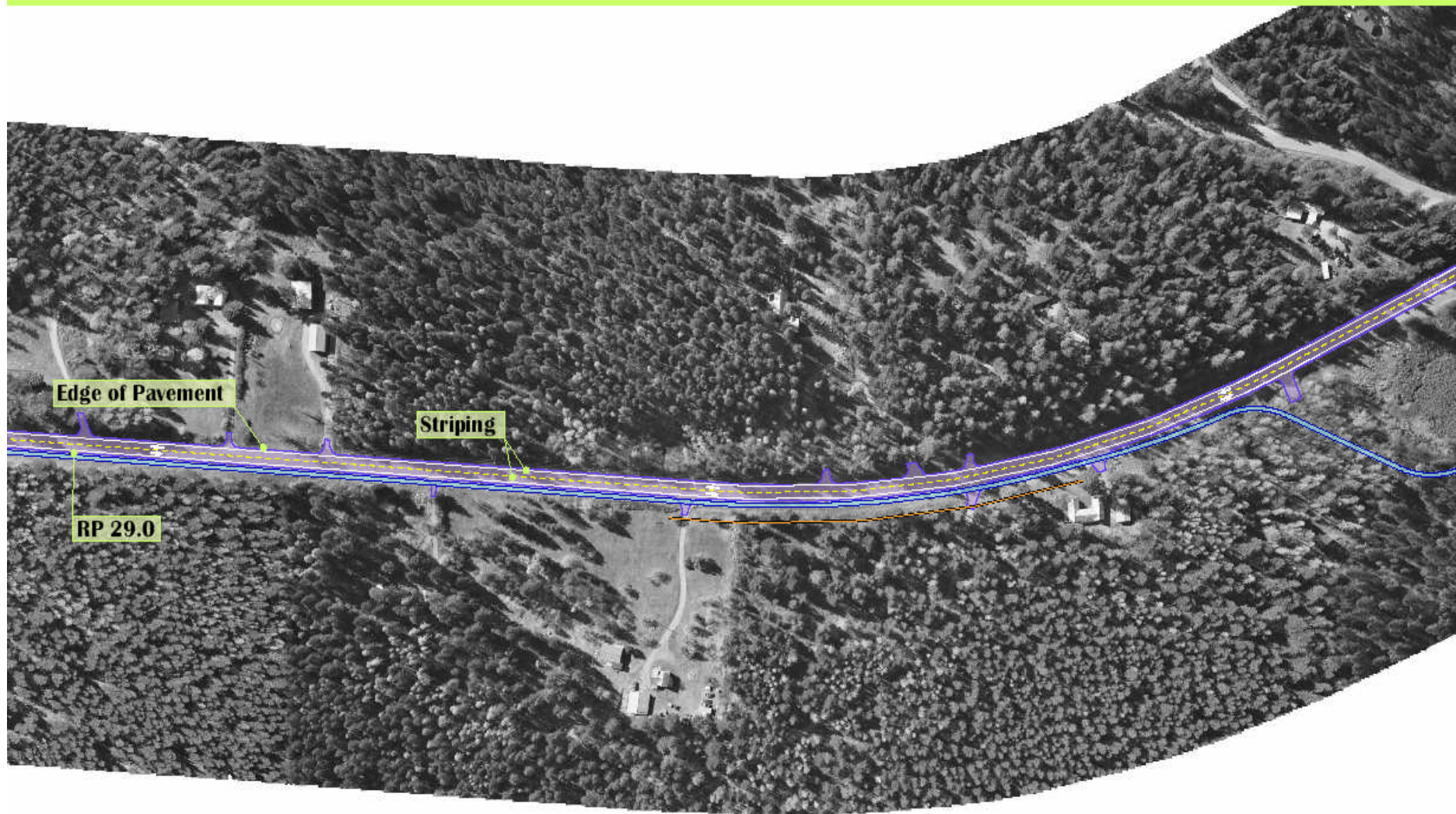
Fill Retaining Walls ———
Cut Retaining Walls ———

Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———
Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

Figure B-5
Preferred Alternative

T:\230003\Design\Freshend_graphical\EA2003\plan5.8.10

BIGFORK



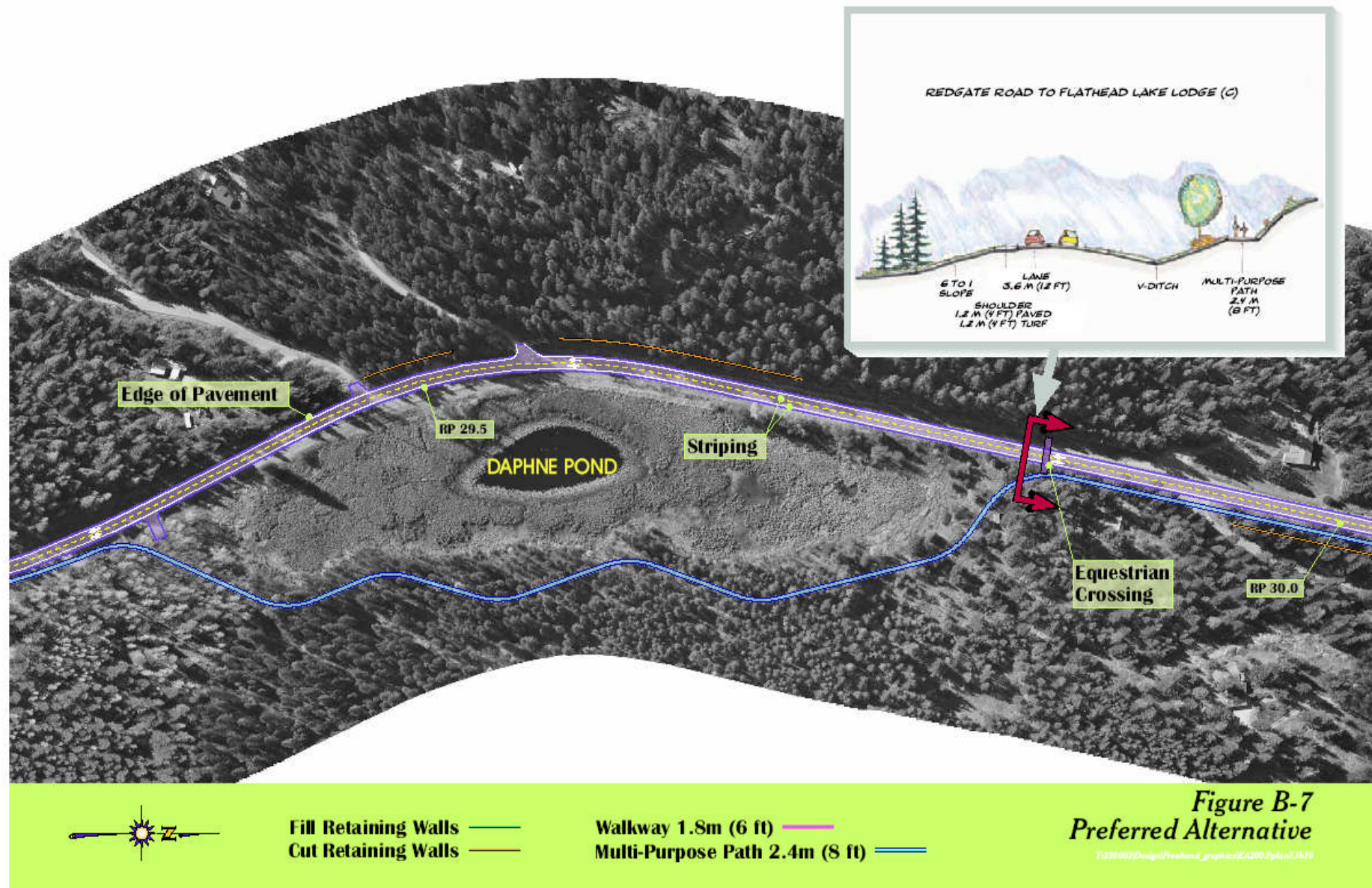
Fill Retaining Walls ———
Cut Retaining Walls ———

Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———
Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

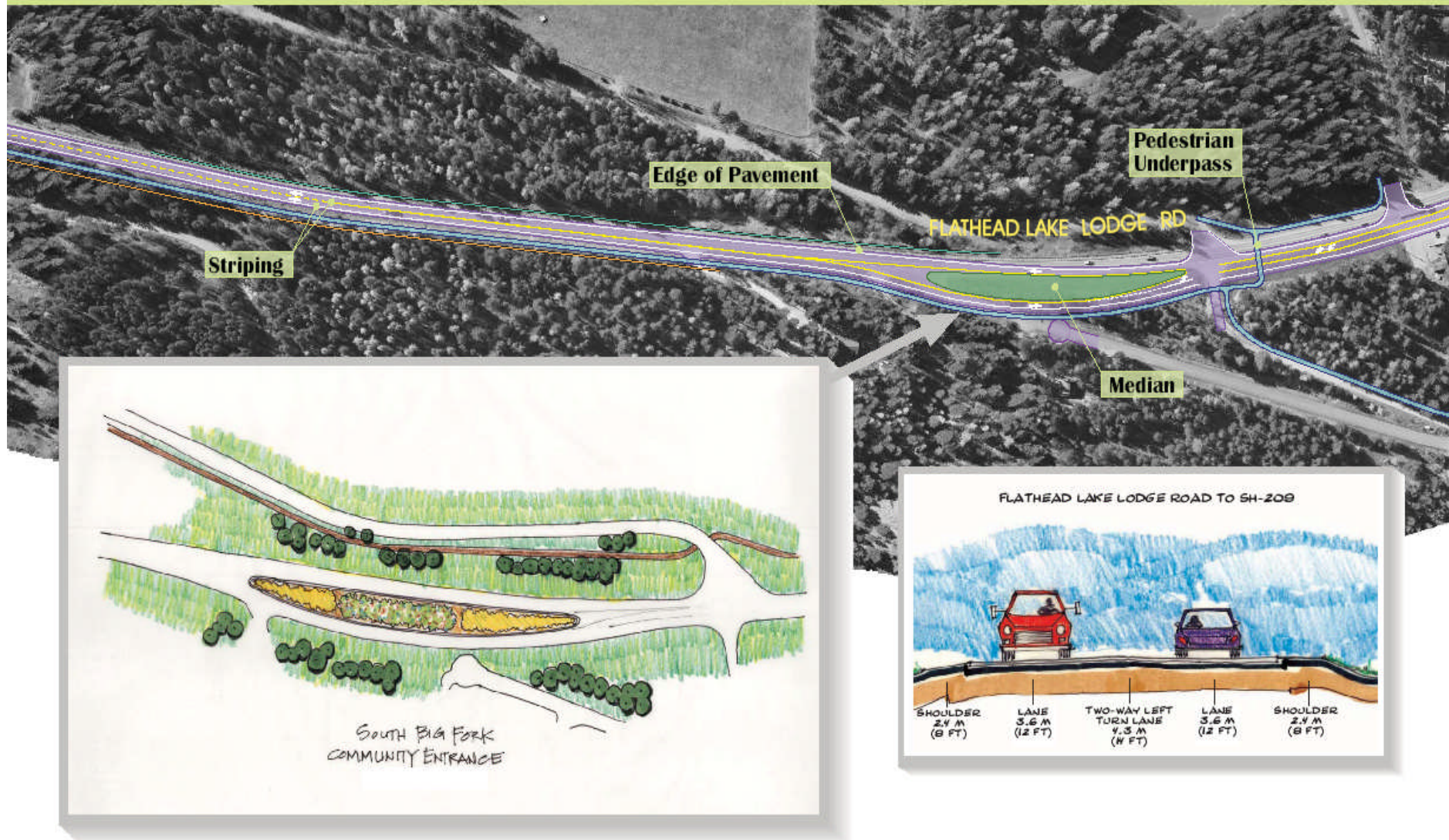
Figure B-6
Preferred Alternative

T:\230063\Design\Freehand_graphics\EA2003\plan6.rvt 0

BIGFORK



BIGFORK



Fill Retaining Walls ———
Cut Retaining Walls ———

Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———
Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

Figure B-8
Preferred Alternative

T:\200\003\Design\Freshend_graphics\EA2003\plan.8.06.10

BIGFORK

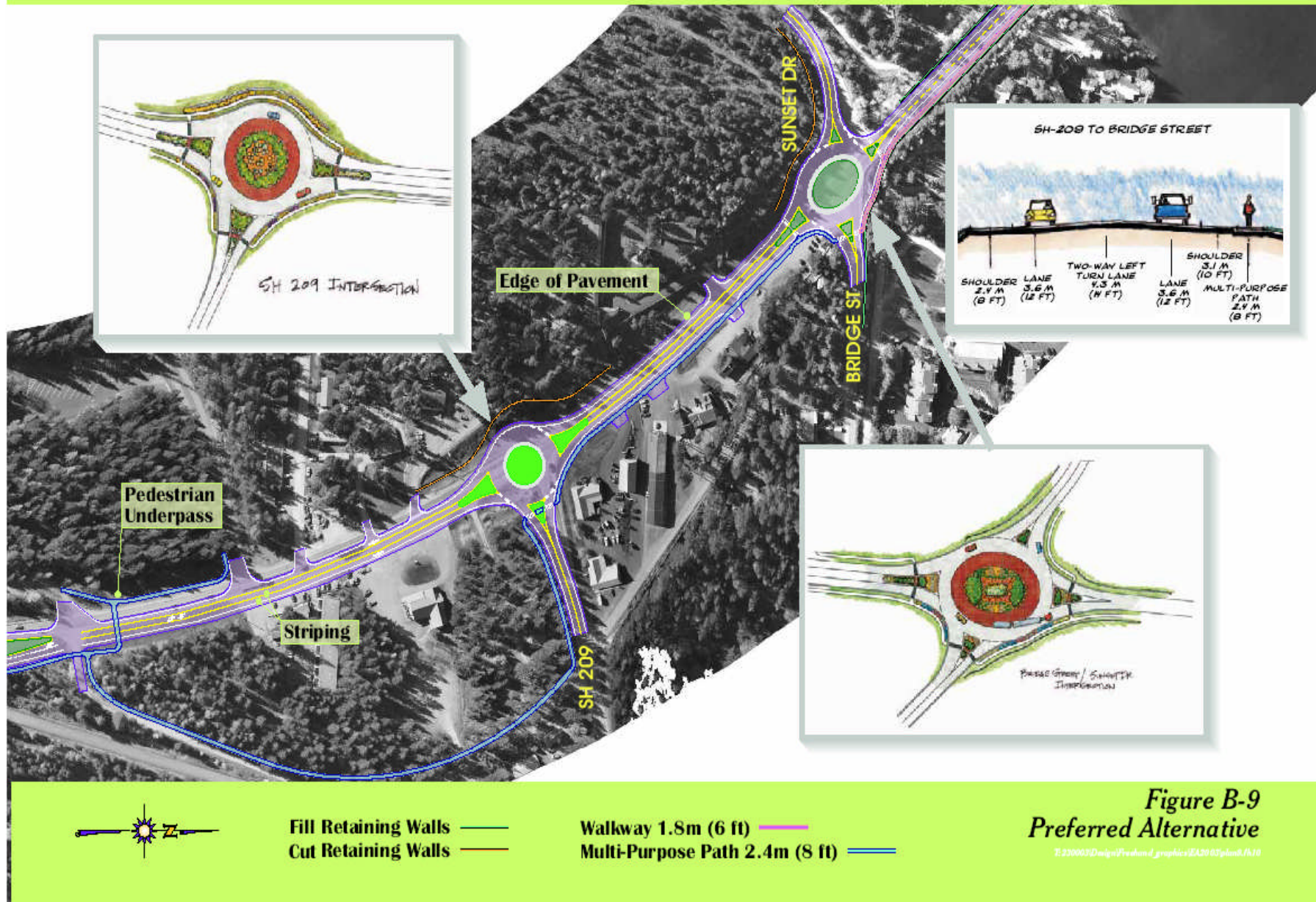
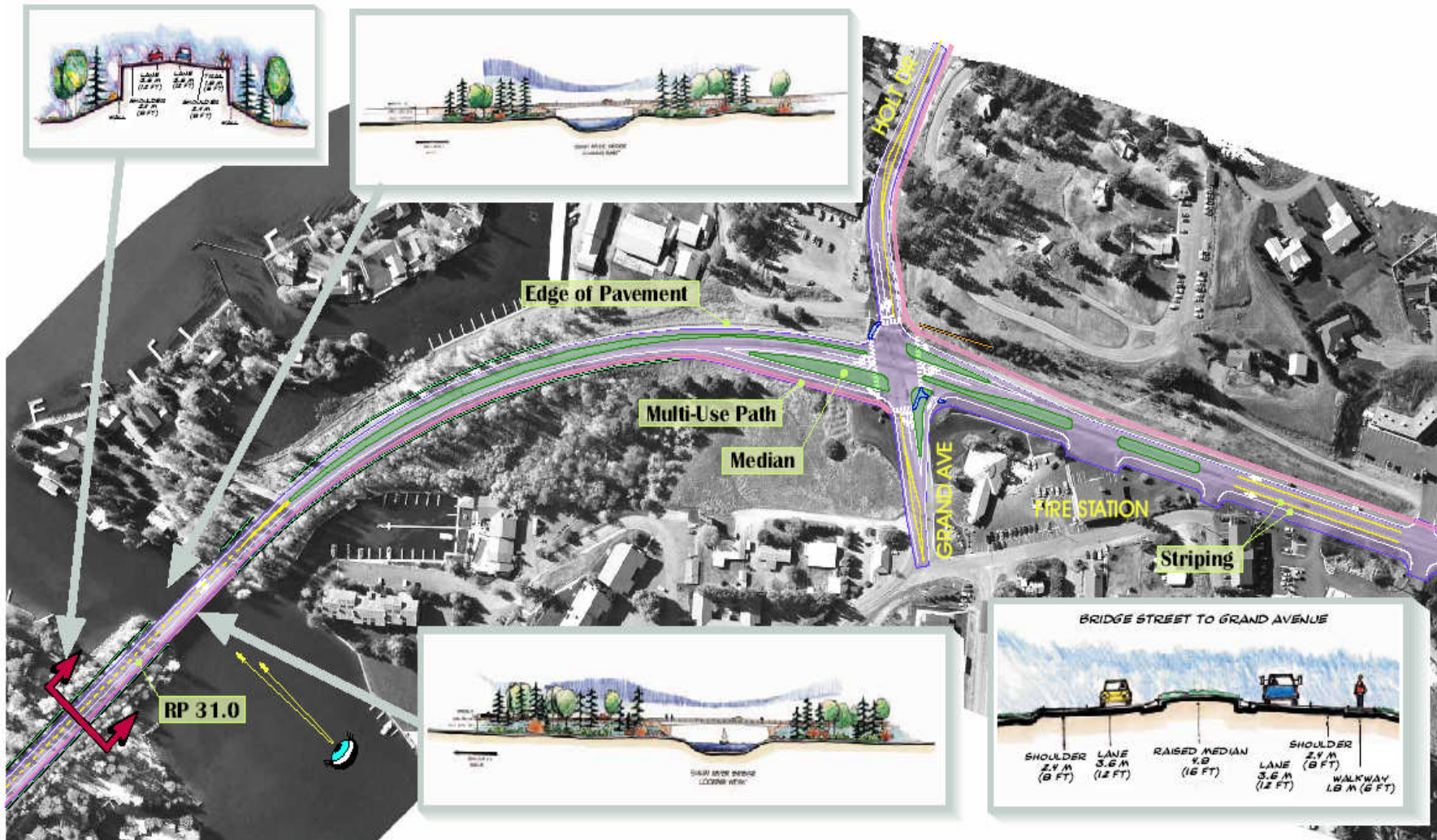


Figure B-9
Preferred Alternative

T:\2006\20\Design\Freshair_graphics\EA2005\plan06.fbx

BIGFORK



Fill Retaining Walls ———

Cut Retaining Walls ———

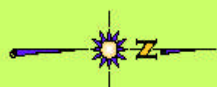
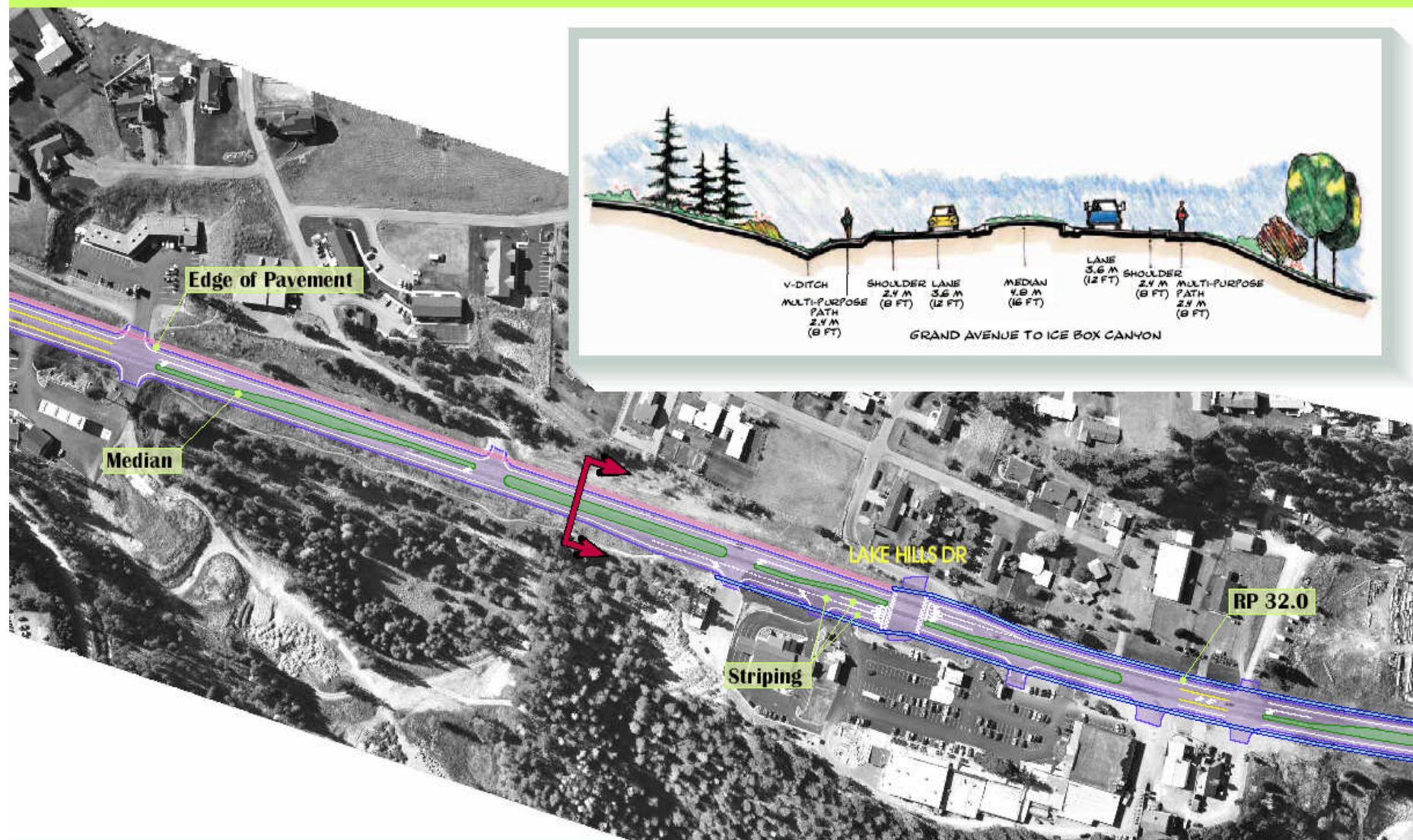
Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———

Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

Figure B-10
Preferred Alternative

T220003 (Design/Prehand_graphics/EA2003plan10.fk10)

BIGFORK



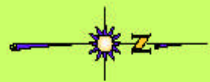
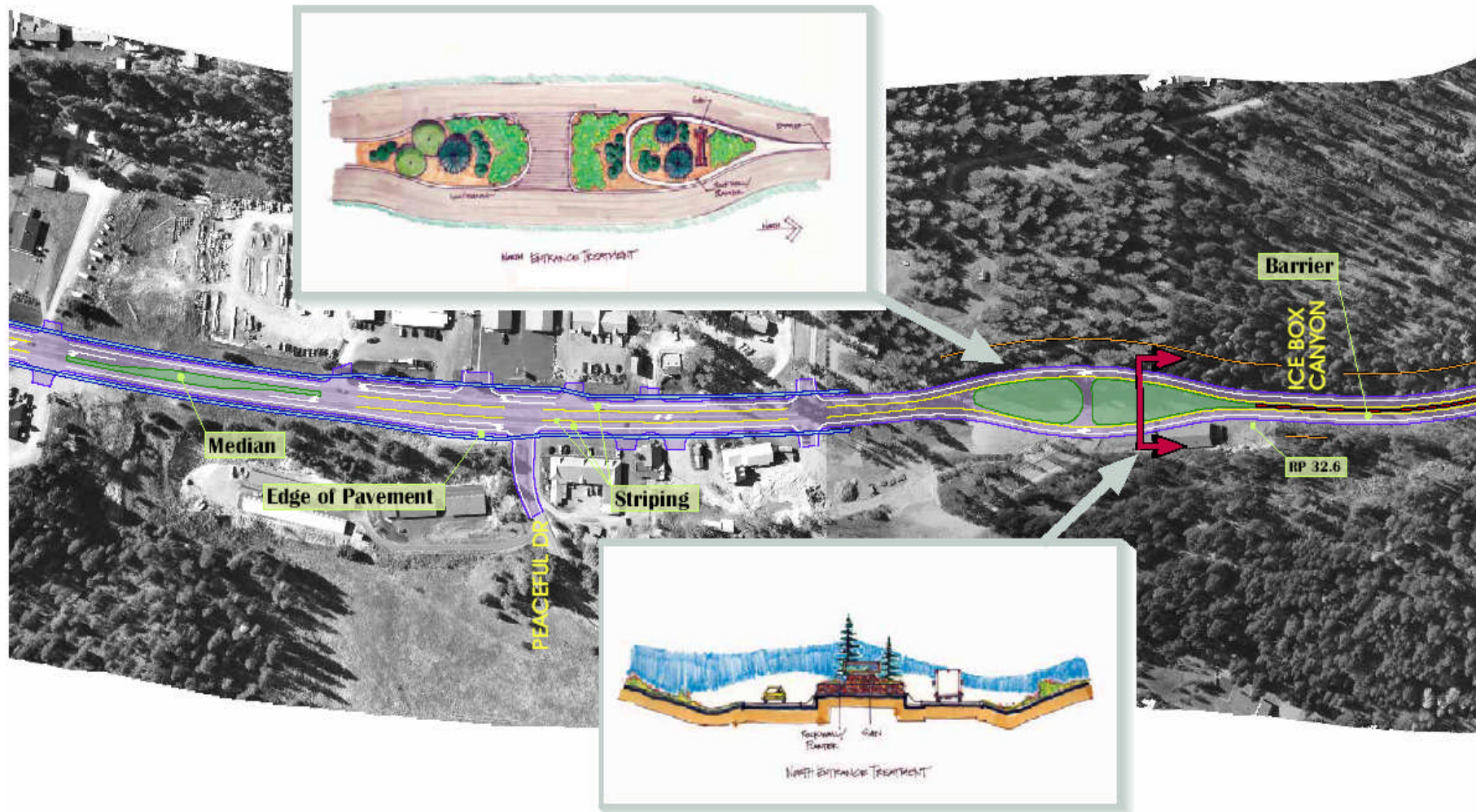
Fill Retaining Walls ———
Cut Retaining Walls ———

Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———
Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

Figure B-11
Preferred Alternative

T:\230005\Design\Fresh and Graphics\EA2003\plan 11.R10

BIGFORK



Fill Retaining Walls ———
Cut Retaining Walls ———

Walkway 1.8m (6 ft) ———
Multi-Purpose Path 2.4m (8 ft) ———

Figure B-12
Preferred Alternative

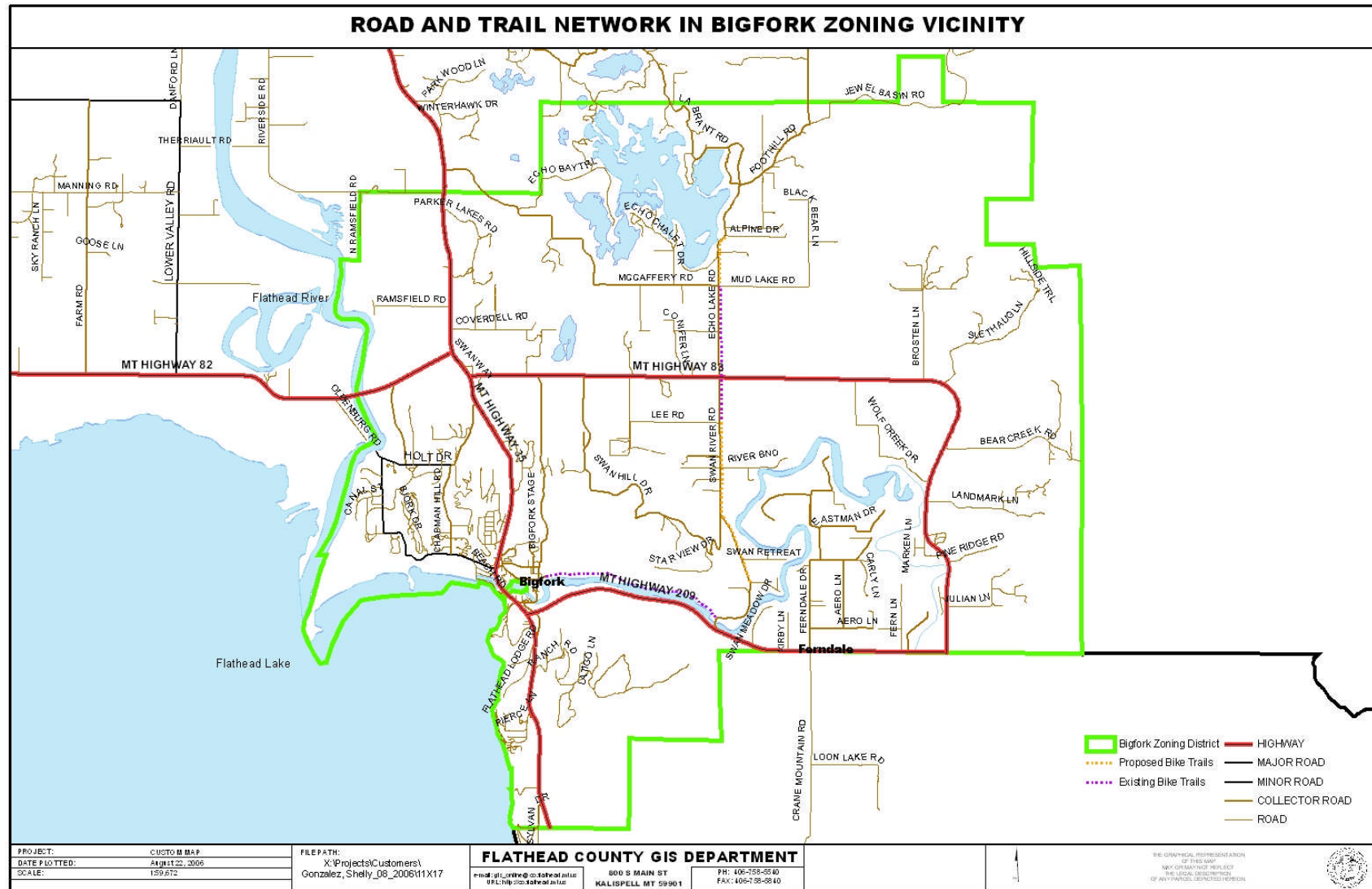
T:\2000\07\Design\Freshen.d_graphics\EA2000\plan12.B.10

Alternative Modes of Transportation

As stated in the Bigfork Survey, the community supports the development of pedestrian, bicycle and cart paths throughout the BPA. Residential and commercial developments should include plans to create and link multi-purpose pathways to provide residents with a safe means of travel and recreation.

Currently there are several unconnected pathways in the BPA. **(See Map 12-Road & Trail Network)** The Nature Trail provides a means to travel from Bigfork Village to Swan River Road. Portions of Swan River and Echo Lake Roads have bike paths which are not connected to the Nature Trail. Likewise, new developments are providing pathways but not linking them to any other adjacent developments. Development of linked multi-use pathways is essential to encourage non-automobile commuting and recreation, and reduce traffic congestion and fuel consumption.

Map 12



Transportation Goals and Policies

Goal Statement:

The BLUAC, the BSC, and local organizations will strive to work with the Montana Department of Transportation and Flathead County Road and Bridge Department to facilitate the development of safe transportation routes for vehicles, bicycles, motorized carts, and pedestrians throughout the BPA.

Goal

G.30 Encourage the development and maintenance of a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation system.

Policy

- P.30.1 Promote multi-modal transportation opportunities.
1. Require development through the subdivision review process to be consistent with adopted Flathead County Area trail plans and provide for linked cart and bike paths.
 2. Sidewalks shall be provided in accordance with County Subdivision Regulations.
- P.30.2 Encourage development to provide coordinated circulation patterns that are consistent with an effective transportation system, and preserves sensitive areas.
1. Require development through the subdivision review process to design proposed access and road systems, showing their relationships to existing and future arterial locations, and proposed trail plans.
 2. Require development through the subdivision review process to coordinate proposed new roads with both existing and planned roads, taking into consideration current and proposed circulation and development patterns.
- P.30.3 Encourage multiple ingress and egress to residential developments to provide for safer traffic flow and mitigate congestion and hazards.
- P.30.4 Roads in developments should be designed to complement the “village” character and existing physical terrain. Roads shall be designed for public safety.
- P.30.5 State and highway signs should be designed to enhance the unique “village” character and scenic qualities within the BPA.

PART VIII - PUBLIC FACILITIES

Summary – Conditions and Trends

Generally, the infrastructure and services provided by public facilities in the BPA adequately meet the needs of the community. Population growth in the BPA will require significant expansion of the Bigfork Water and Sewer District (BWSD) facilities at a substantial investment. Other public service providers are proactively planning for expansion but find no restrictions on their current capabilities.

Water and Waste Water

Water

The information provided in this section is adapted from the Annual Water Quality Report for the BWSD and a report by the BWSD manager to the BLUAC. The Annual Water Quality Report is a snapshot of the quality of water provided last year. It includes details regarding the source of water, what the water contains and how it compares to EPA and the State of Montana standards.

In the Bigfork Water and Sewer District, drinking water comes from four wells which are tested monthly. (**See Map 6-Bigfork Sewer and Water District**) Wells #1 and #2 are both 300 feet deep. The drinking water is safe and meets all federal and state requirements. Well #4 tested high in uranium, but the running annual average was below the maximum contaminant level. This well is used infrequently as an emergency backup. When it is used, the water from well #4 is blended with water from the other three wells.

Total water system pumping capacity is 1.6 million gallons per day. Current summer usage is 1.5 million gallons per day with winter usage 200-300,000 gallons per household per day. With summer usage reaching system capacity, and numerous residential and commercial developments expected to utilize the system in the near future, an additional well and supporting infrastructure are necessary. Moreover, additional water storage is needed as the system has only a one-day supply of water to serve the needs of the District.

In 2005, 1160 feet of water main on Bay Drive was replaced, and 450 feet of water main on Bjork Drive was added. Presently, there are 1,111 service connections with 91 new connections added in 2005 alone.

Wastewater

Current Treatment Capacity

The information provided in this section is adapted from the 2006 Preliminary Engineering report by Morrison and Maierle, Inc.

The Bigfork Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF), managed by the Bigfork Water and Sewer District, is a well-run and well-maintained facility that consistently meets its Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System discharge standards. However, after nearly 20 years of service the facility is beginning to show its age. Facilities of this type generally require major mechanical systems replacement or rehabilitation within a 20-year period, and structural improvements are often required as well.

The Bigfork WWTF is currently operating below its design capacity of 500,000 gallons per day (gpd) at an average of 350,000 gpd. The facility performs well in meeting its current discharge permit. However, new ammonia toxicity limits and potential tighter Total Maximum Daily Load and non-degradation limits may be required under the new permit. It is unlikely the current facility can meet stricter limits in the future under most circumstances. However, new equipment will provide for the long-term needs of the community in its current location.

After the 2006 Preliminary Engineering report was issued, the WWTF exceeded its design capacity when a “rain event” caused storm drainage to overflow the sewer system, resulting in infected sewage being discharged into Swan River. As summer usage has historically maximized the system’s capacity, additional development and sewer hookups within the District will place a significant burden on the system and to public health and safety.

Future Service Area Planning and Growth

The BWSD planning area encompasses the community of Bigfork, plus future areas which may be annexed into the District. The BWSD’s wastewater treatment facility discharges effluent into Flathead Lake at the mouth of the Swan River. The planning area is bordered on the west by the Flathead River, on the southwest by Flathead Lake, on the south by Lake County, on the east by topography, and north by Highway 83 (with an extension north along Highway 35).

Since 2000, the BWSD has grown at a faster rate than Flathead County. The source of this growth has been a combination of the rapid residential and seasonal development in the area and boundary expansion. Recent historical customer and population growth, combined with current district commitments to additional lots within the district, suggests that strong growth will continue. A yearly growth rate of 5% was selected to project the year round residential sewered population for the District by 2025. This projection results in a peak summertime population of 6,656. This population would correspond to a summertime average flow of 670,000 gpd and a maximum day flow of 1,000,000 gpd to the WWTF. These projected flows significantly exceed the current capacity of the existing treatment facility.

Waste Water Treatment Facility Expansion

Based on the projected growth within the District, the current WWTF will not be able to meet new permit limits within 5-7 years. Therefore, an expansion or modification of the facility is required. Taking into consideration capital costs, annual operating and maintenance costs, availability of grants and other non-economic factors, the preferred collection system and treatment facility improvement alternatives are summarized below. It is advisable to phase the implementation of capital needs according to the assigned priority. A two-phased approach is recommended as a minimum.

Phase 1 improvements include the following near-term needs:

Phase 1 Collection System Improvements:

- Replace Bay and Sunset lift stations
- Sewer video inspections

Phase 1 WWTF Improvements:

- New Headworks Facility, including lift station upgrades

- WWTF Control Upgrade
- Miscellaneous mechanical equipment upgrade (prior to mid-term improvements)

Phase 2 improvements consist of the following mid-term needs:

Phase 2 Collection System Improvements:

- Develop a collection system computer model
- Replace/upgrade other lift stations as needed

Phase 2 WWTF Improvements:

- Membrane Bioreactor
- New Ultraviolet Disinfection Facility
- Auto-thermal Thermophilic Aerobic Digester and Storage
- Outfall Upgrade
- Comprehensive Odor Control System
- Lab and Office Upgrade
- Pharmaceutical Filtration System (distant future)

Phase 1 improvements are estimated to cost \$2,035,000 (2007 dollars). Phase 2 improvements are estimated to cost \$10,028,000 (2009 dollars). The Draft Preliminary Engineering Report and Treasure State Endowment Program Grant Application have been completed for Phase 1.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Within the BPA, there is one dedicated disposal and recycling site and it is located on Hwy 83. This site is used extensively by the community as evidenced by full cans on a consistent basis, especially the recycling receptacle.

- The disposal area is not monitored which has resulted in improper use.
- Survey respondents suggest that the site be monitored, and screened or bermed to create a visual barrier.
- Flathead County Solid Waste District is concerned about improper dumping of construction materials, furniture, mattresses and hazardous materials at the site.
- Site closure would significantly impact the community's waste disposal and recycling efforts.

Energy

Natural Gas

Northwest Energy (NE) is the sole provider of natural gas to a portion of the BPA. The company operates and maintains the Bigfork natural gas system in strict compliance with state and federal regulations.

- Regulations include various inspections, leakage surveys and damage prevention programs.
- NE monitors for system performance and capital improvement requirements to maintain safe, reliable service and plan for load growth.
- NE works with developers for extensions of gas services as practical.

Electricity

Flathead Electric Cooperative (FEC) is the electricity supplier for the BPA. FEC is currently replacing older primary cables throughout the Bigfork service area in anticipation of continued growth and service needs.

- FEC will work more closely with neighborhoods to address infrastructure improvements including potential reduction of overhead lines.
- FEC will investigate obtaining energy from alternative production sources.

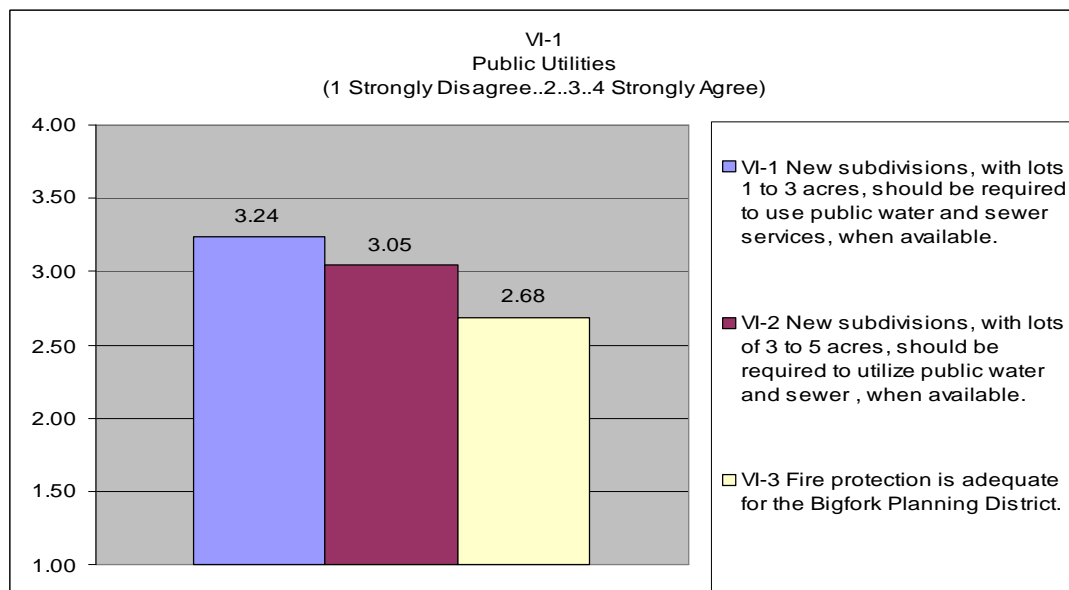
Telecommunications

CenturyTel is the primary 911, voice and data provider in the BPA. The provider serves an area of about 3,500 square miles with more than 67,000 access lines.

- CenturyTel maintains and operates fiber optic lines between the Kalispell hub and the BPA.
- DSL capability exists to any location within 18,000 feet of a network node.
- CenturyTel will continue to improve bandwidth within the Flathead region.
- Future costs for building out the system in the BPA will be minimal because existing capacity is adequate.

Excerpts from BPA Survey

No doubt sensitive to a variety of environment issues currently before the public, respondents generally supported the concept of new subdivisions being required to use public utilities (Figure VI-1, below). Though the survey only listed two selections in this area (subdivisions with lots of 1 to 3 acres, and subdivisions with lots of 3 to 5 acres), the data shows a preference for a requirement to use available public utilities when lot sizes decrease and density increases. The adequacy of area fire protection received slightly more than neutral support. Though the question did not delve into specifics, survey comments support the notion that this is a question of capacity and not competence.



Public Facilities Goals and Policies

Goal Statement:

The Bigfork community, through the BSC, will work with state and county agencies to promote suitable infrastructure and services in support of existing and future development.

Goal

G.31 Encourage cost-effective extensions of public facilities throughout the BPA.

Policy

P.31.1 Through the subdivision review process, development shall be required to contribute its proportionate share of the costs of impacts on public facilities.

P.31.2 Through the subdivision review process, development should provide rights of way to support future growth.

Goal

G.32 Provide safe utility systems.

Policy

P.32.1 Encourage multi-user, public and private water and wastewater treatment systems.

P.32.2 Encourage the expansion of existing municipal and private service systems into areas indicated by the Future Land Use Designation Map (Map #10) where higher density development is most probable.

P.32.3 Support the feasibility of promoting county water and sewer districts and connections to other districts such as Lake County.

Goal

G.33 Require that solid wastes and recyclable materials are disposed of properly.

Policy

P.33.1 Continue to support a Bigfork disposal site to minimize traffic and travel to other county disposal sites, as well as, minimize traffic due to independent garbage haulers.

P.33.2 Encourage a site monitoring system to discourage the disposal of improper materials.

P.33.3 Encourage the expansion of the recycling program to include glass and yard waste.

P.33.4 Encourage the redesign and/or relocation of the Bigfork disposal site to shield, contain, and monitor the site for disposal compliance.

PART IX - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee will use the 2006 Bigfork Neighborhood Plan coupled with the 2005 Bigfork Survey, Bigfork Steering Committee input, public input, and sound community planning principles as the guiding foundation of its planning and zoning efforts within the BPA.

The Bigfork Neighborhood Plan will be implemented using a variety of techniques. Some techniques are regulatory and will be unique to the Bigfork area (such as zoning), some techniques are regulatory but are county-wide in their scope (such as lake and lakeshore regulations, floodplain regulations, subdivision regulations) and still others are county-wide planning efforts that will guide resource expenditures and/or growth development in the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan area and should be guided by the vision of the Bigfork Community (capital improvements planning, strategic planning, impact fees). In addition to these formal implementation techniques, subcommittees of the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee will be created to develop voluntary architectural, visual and noise guidelines for development that are in the interest of the community's vision. A further subcommittee of the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee will be created to distribute and raise awareness of these voluntary guidelines.

Zoning: Land use zoning is the primary local regulatory mechanism by which development is guided to comply with the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan. Zoning establishes permitted land uses, conditionally permitted land uses and bulk and dimensional requirements (including density of subdivision). Zoning shall be adopted and/or amended by considering the Future Land Use Map for the appropriate land use, the goals and policies of the Plan for the appropriate bulk and dimensional standards, and Part V of this Plan for guidance on applying zoning in the appropriate areas based on service delivery, adequacy of infrastructure, constraints of the natural and built environment and other criteria.

The Future Land Use Map (Map 10) is a visual, cartographic representation of where growth and land use changes in Bigfork should occur in order for the policies of the Plan to be most appropriately implemented. The Future Land Use Map shall be created to spatially represent the policies of the Plan, and zoning shall be based on this map in addition to the policies themselves. From time to time, public interest may be served by considering amendments to the land use map in order to accommodate changes of land use. These changes shall be made in accordance with the goals and policies of the Bigfork Neighborhood and shall be guided by extensive public participation and strong public interest in seeing the community's plan amended. See Part X of the Plan for more on the land use map amendment process.

Lake & Lakeshore Protection Regulations: In accordance with Montana law, Flathead County has adopted Lake & Lakeshore Protection Regulations. These regulations apply to those lakes listed in Section 1.4 of said document. Under Montana statute (75-7-207 MCA), these regulations can be adopted in "differing form" for various lakes within a governing body's jurisdiction. As an implementation of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan, the Bigfork community requests that the Planning Board give consideration to the goals and policies of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan (particularly those pertaining to lake and/or water quality issues) prior to

recommending any changes to the Lake & Lakeshore Regulations that impact lakes within the jurisdiction of the Plan.

Floodplain Regulations: In accordance with Montana law, Flathead County has adopted Floodplain and Floodway Management Regulations. These regulations must meet or exceed the minimum standards of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (76-5-301 MCA). As an implementation of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan, the Bigfork Community requests that the governing body give consideration to the goals and policies of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan (particularly those pertaining to water resources and land uses adjacent to water bodies) prior to adopting regulations that exceed the minimums and would impact lands within the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan.

Subdivision Regulations: Neighborhood Plans such as the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan are authorized under 76-1-601(4)(a) M.C.A. to address one or more elements of the Growth Policy in more detail. Furthermore, for jurisdictions that have adopted a growth policy, subdivision regulations must be made in accordance with the growth policy (76-1-606 M.C.A.). Therefore, the Flathead County Subdivision Regulations are an implementation of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan through the Flathead County Growth Policy. However, the Bigfork community recognizes that the county-wide subdivision regulations cannot contain specific standards for the Bigfork area. The Bigfork community therefore requests that the Flathead County Planning Board recognize the importance of the subdivision regulations as an implementation of both the Growth Policy as well as the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan and give consideration to the goals and policies of these plans prior to recommending amendments and/or new provisions of the subdivision regulations to the Flathead County Commissioners.

Capital Improvements Planning: County and local planning for capital facilities (such as public roads, public structures and public utilities) in the Bigfork area should be guided by the goals, policies, and maps contained in the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan. The utilization of the Plan to guide capital expenditures by both Flathead County and local public entities (Bigfork School District, Bigfork Fire Department, etc.) is both required by Montana law (76-1-605 M.C.A.) and is a mechanism for implementing the Plan. Prioritization of roadway improvements and other capital expenditures within the Bigfork area should be used to guide growth to areas designated by the Plan. Capital expenditures should also guide growth to those areas most efficiently served and accessed in the interest of wise use of tax dollars.

Strategic Planning: Chapter 9 of the Flathead County Growth Policy calls for a variety of detailed, strategic plans that deal with specific issues on a county-wide basis to be appended to the document. Some of these include a Transportation Plan, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan and an Affordable Housing Plan. Although created on a county-wide basis, these plans have the potential to implement the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan by guiding county-wide policy and allocating county resources. For example, an Affordable Housing Plan would likely identify Bigfork as an area capable of accommodating affordable housing due to the presence of public sewer and water and convenient access to many other public services and facilities. The Bigfork Neighborhood Plan offers goals and policies regarding affordable housing as well as many other issues for which county-wide strategic plans are proposed. The Bigfork community and Flathead

County as a whole will mutually benefit from consideration by the County of the goals and policies of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan during the process of creating strategic plans.

Impact Fees: Impact fees are authorized by Montana law to fund the additional service capacity required by the development from which it is collected. Fees are collected within service areas and these areas can be localized or county-wide, depending on the service being impacted. For example, an impact fee for impacts of growth to a county-wide jail facility could be collected from a county-wide service area, or an impact fee for impacts to the Bigfork Fire Department could be collected only from within the Bigfork Fire District. Both of these scenarios help offset the additional costs of growth to existing Bigfork residents and are an implementation of the Plan. Furthermore, the calculation of impact fees within the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan area should give consideration to the guidance provided by the Plan, particularly in the establishment of level of service standards, the forecasting of future service needs, the identifying of service areas and the determination of capital improvements needed to serve new growth.

Subcommittees: The Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee should meet in the first six months after the Plan has been adopted to establish priorities and set up subcommittees. The work of the subcommittees will be to create non-regulatory guidelines to be distributed and promoted.

- Architectural Design Subcommittee
- Noise and Visual Pollution Subcommittee
- Information Awareness Subcommittee
- Other committees can be created over time as issues arise

PART X - AMENDMENT PROCESS

Amendments to the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan text and/or maps may be proposed by any landowner or registered voter living in the BPA and shall be presented to the BLUAC. Upon a majority vote of the members of the BLUAC in favor of further consideration of the proposed amendment, the amendment shall be referred to the BSC for study and comment. A public meeting shall be held by the BLUAC and the BSC to consider public comment on the amendment. The BSC shall report a favorable or unfavorable recommendation on the amendment in writing to the BLUAC.

Final amendment to the BNP shall require a majority vote of the members of the BLUAC, approval of Flathead County Planning Board, and the Flathead County Commissioners.

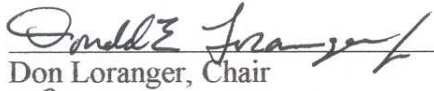
From time to time, it may be appropriate to amend the text and/or maps contained within the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan. Amendments shall be processed in the following manner:

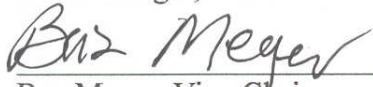
- 1. A reasonable effort shall be made by the applicant to communicate the nature and purpose of the amendment request to the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee (BLUAC). Early communication increases the likelihood that all interested parties can consider and respond to each other's needs and constraints. This communication also increases the likelihood that an applicant can respect the integrity and intent of the plan while accomplishing the purpose of the amendment(s). However, the consent of the BLUAC is not required prior to proceeding to Step 2 of this process.*
- 2. The applicant shall submit an Application for Neighborhood Plan Amendment to the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office (FCPZ). The application for amendment shall address the following criteria (adapted directly from Chapter 9 of the Flathead County Growth Policy):*
 - Does the amendment affect overall compliance of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan with 76-1-601, MCA?*
 - Is the amendment based on existing characteristics and/or projected trends that are substantially different from those presented in the most recent update?*
 - Does the amendment create inconsistencies within the document?*
 - Does the amendment further protect and comply with the seven elements of the public's vision for the future of Flathead County (found in Chapter 1 of the Flathead County Growth Policy) and Part I of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan?*
 - Has the proposed amendment undergone a sufficient process of public participation and review?*
- 3. FCPZ will review the requested amendment for compliance with the criteria above and prepare a report to the Flathead County Planning Board.*
- 4. FCPZ will present the application to BLUAC prior to the Planning Board public hearing and seek a recommendation from the BLUAC to the Planning Board on the proposed amendment(s).*
- 5. FCPZ will present the application, report and BLUAC recommendation to the Planning Board and the Planning Board will hold a public hearing in conformance with 76-1-602, MCA and the Board's own bylaws regarding public hearings.*

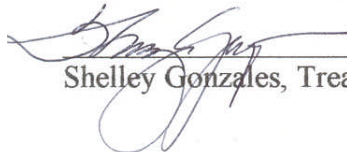
6. *The Planning Board will forward, by resolution, a recommendation on the proposed amendment(s) to the Flathead County Commissioners.*

XI - ADOPTION

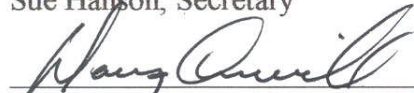
The foregoing Bigfork Neighborhood Land Use Plan was adopted on (date)
10-12-06 by the **2005/2006 Bigfork Steering Committee**:

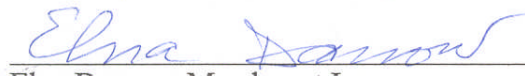

Don Loranger, Chair


Buz Meyer, Vice-Chair


Shelley Gonzales, Treasurer

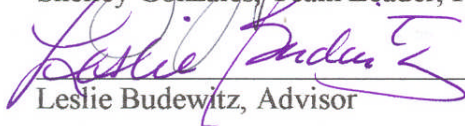
Sue Hanson, Secretary


Doug Averill, Member at Large


Elna Darrow, Member at Large

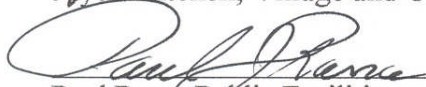
Bigfork Neighborhood Plan Development Team:


Shelley Gonzales, Team Leader, Population and Economics, and Transportation

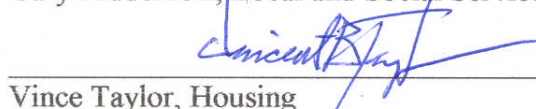

Leslie Budewitz, Advisor

Al Johnson, Land Use and Natural Resources


Joyce Mitchell, Village and Commercial


Paul Rana, Public Facilities


Gary Ridderhoff, Local and Social Services


Vince Taylor, Housing

The foregoing Bigfork Neighborhood Land Use Plan was adopted on (date)
3-8-07 by the **2006/2007 Bigfork Steering Committee:**

Elna Darrow

Elna Darrow, Chair

Craig Wagner

Craig Wagner, Vice-Chair

Charles B. Gough

Chuck Gough, Treasurer

Pat Wagner

Pat Wagner, Secretary

Don Loranger

Don Loranger, Member at Large

Gary Ridderhoff

Gary Ridderhoff, Member at Large

The foregoing Bigfork Neighborhood Land Use Plan was adopted on (date)
3-8-07 by the **Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee**

John Bourquin

John Bourquin, Chair

Phil Hanson, Vice-Chair

Darrel Coverdell

Darrel Coverdell, Member at Large

Shelley Gonzales

Shelley Gonzales

Paul Guerrant

Paul Guerrant

Mary Jo Naive

Mary Jo Naive

Clarice Ryan

Clarice Ryan

PART XII - AMENDED ADOPTION

The foregoing amended Bigfork Neighborhood Land Use Plan was adopted on (date)
February 14, 2008 by the **2007/2008 Bigfork Steering Committee:**

Craig Wagner
Craig Wagner, Chair

Elna Darrow
Elna Darrow, Vice-Chair

Vacant, Treasurer

Pat Wagner
Pat Wagner, Secretary

Bruce Solberg
Bruce Solberg, Member at Large

Paul Rana
Paul Rana, Member at Large

Don Loranger
Don Loranger, Past Chair

The foregoing amended Bigfork Neighborhood Land Use Plan was adopted on (date)
February 14, 2008 by the **Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee:**

John Bourquin
John Bourquin, Chair

Shelley Gonzales
Shelley Gonzales, Vice-Chair

Darrel Coverdell
Darrel Coverdell

Charles B. Gough
Chuck Gough

Paul Guerrant
Paul Guerrant

Phil Hanson

Gary Ridderhoff
Gary Ridderhoff, Member at Large

PART XII - AMENDED ADOPTION

The foregoing amended Bigfork Neighborhood Land Use Plan was adopted on (date)

January 23, 2009 by the **2008/2009 Bigfork Steering Committee:**

Craig Wagner
Craig Wagner, Chair

Elna Darrow
Elna Darrow, Vice-Chair

Steve Zabaro
Steve Zabaro, Treasurer

Pat Wagner
Pat Wagner, Secretary

Bruce Solberg
Bruce Solberg, Member at Large

Paul Rana
Paul Rana, Member at Large

Don Loranger
Don Loranger, Past Chair

The foregoing amended Bigfork Neighborhood Land Use Plan was adopted on (date)

January 27, 2009 by the **Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee:**

Shelley Gonzales
Shelley Gonzales, Chair

Paul Guerrant
Paul Guerrant, Vice-Chair

John Bourquin
John Bourquin

Darrel Coverdell
Darrel Coverdell

Charles B. Gough
Charles Gough

Gary Ridderhoff
Gary Ridderhoff

Al Johnson
Al Johnson, Member at Large

PART XIII – RESOLUTION
FLATHEAD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
BIGFORK NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Board of County Commissioners approved the Flathead County Growth Policy on March 19, 2007 pursuant to 76-1-601, M.C.A.; and

WHEREAS the Growth Policy envisions neighborhood plans being an important component of the policy implementation; and

WHEREAS, the Growth Policy incorporated existing approved and adopted neighborhood plans as part of the Growth Policy; and

WHEREAS, The Bigfork Neighborhood Plan was approved by the Flathead County Commission, as Resolution 933A, on August 16, 1993, and incorporated as an addendum to the Flathead County Master Plan and was therefore adopted as an addendum to the Flathead County Growth Policy; and

WHEREAS, Policy 45.2 of the Flathead County Growth Policy states that existing plans shall be reviewed to determine if they should be updated; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Part 4 of Chapter 10 of the Flathead County Growth Policy the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan was reviewed by the planning staff and prioritized for updating by the Flathead County Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan was reviewed and updated by the residents of Bigfork and the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee recommended approval with modifications to the Flathead County Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Planning Board held a public hearing concerning the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan on April 09, 2008, and considered the public comments received at that hearing and held a joint public workshop with the Bigfork Steering Committee and the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee on December 11, 2008 to consider and recommend amendments to the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Planning Board held another public hearing concerning the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan on February 11, 2009 and considered the public comments received at that hearing and held another public workshop on March 25, 2009 to consider and recommend further amendments to the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board finds that the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan, as submitted and revised meets the criteria of Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6 of the Montana Code Annotated and is in general conformance with the Flathead County Growth Policy.

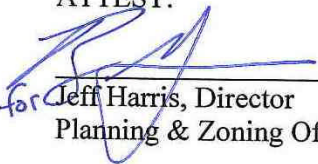
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Flathead County Planning Board hereby recommends that the Flathead County Board of County Commissioners adopt the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan as amended and attached hereto (with amendments highlighted yellow, additions shown italicized and deletions shown stricken) and that the revised plan with the same boundary as the original plan be appended to the Flathead County Growth Policy.

Dated this 25th day of March, 2009.

FLATHEAD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
Flathead County, Montana

By: Gordon Cross, Chairman
Gordon Cross, Chairman

ATTEST:

for 
Jeff Harris, Director
Planning & Zoning Office

**PART XIII – RESOLUTION
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF FLATHEAD COUNTY**

Appendix A

Housing Assistance Programs Available In Bigfork Planning Area

Northwest Montana Human Resources

The mission of NMHR is to provide opportunities for disadvantaged citizens to become more self-sufficient. NMHR is based in Kalispell. It serves as a subcontractor to the Montana Department of Commerce to administer the Section 8 rental assistance program in Flathead, Lake, Sanders and Lincoln Counties. Certificates and vouchers reimburse the landlord for a portion of rent due from low-income families and persons.

Mutual Self-Help Housing

MSH is a partnership between NMHR and USDA Rural Development and Community frameworks. MSH offers qualified buyers down payment and closing costs by working as a group with other families to help build their homes. Their labor (sweat equity) becomes their down payment. MSH is a government funded organization.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is an ecumenical Christian ministry and equal housing opportunity lender which partners with very low-income qualified families in need of a simple decent affordable house in which to live. Homeowners are required to participate in the construction of their own home and others to meet their sweat equity demand. Habitat sells the house to the family partner at no profit and no interest. Habitat for Humanity depends upon the generosity of volunteers, foundations, local businesses, churches and individuals. Habitat does not receive government funds for home construction.

Encouraging the Homeownership Ideals for Communities

ETHIC is a holistic approach serving all people by removing barriers to achieve and maintain home and property ownership. ETHIC provides private one on one counseling and consulting, along with seminars and educational classes for homebuyers such as understanding credit, financing real estate, protecting your investment for seniors, and reverse mortgages. Home and property educational classes are also available for running a home, household budgeting, complaint resolution, and foreclosure prevention.

Residential Ownership Opportunities Foundation

ROOF places families in their own homes, assisting qualified families by offering certified education and counseling, expanding public awareness, and maintaining a database of consumer and industry resources of various housing organizations. ROOF obtains and funds grants to assist with down payments, closing costs and home inspections. ROOF coordinates volunteers to aid families involved in Mutual Self help Housing projects. ROOF is administered by the Northwest Montana Association of Realtors through a board of directors consisting of active realtors, members of the community at large, President Elect of NMAR and members of the Executive Committee of NMAR.

Glacier Affordable Housing Foundation

Grants are offered to qualified first-time home buyers in need of down payment and closing cost assistance. Cash grant up to \$40,000.00 must be paid back upon sale of the house.

Montana Department of Commerce

The Housing Division of the Montana Department of Commerce, through its consolidated plan, has a planning and application process currently allowing the state to access approximately \$12 million annually from HUD. These funds provide Montana communities with decent, safe and affordable housing; public facilities and other infrastructure; and economic opportunities for low and moderate income families through funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) and Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) programs. Public and private providers of assisted housing, health services, and social services can learn more about the Consolidated Plan by viewing the website at:
http://housing.mt.gov/Hous_CP.asp

Appendix B
Land Use
Specific input from land owners in the Bigfork Zoning District

Methodology:

At three community meetings, the public was invited to express individual preferences regarding the zoning of their property and that of surrounding properties. Recommendations regarding more general land use issues were also sought. There were also *ad hoc* submissions forwarded to the BSC independent of these public meetings.

Below are verbatim transcriptions of the public's expression of their wishes regarding the zoning of their property and of surrounding property. The property descriptions do not reflect an official designation. Indeed, few landowners know the official descriptions of their property. These transcriptions are not submitted as recommendations regarding specific tracts. Rather, we suggest that they express the widely held belief that zoning must prevent uncontrolled and inappropriate development.

Property Description: Furlongs Orchard Lot 3

Current zoning: R-1

Owner: Seiss

Recommendation: Maintain R-1. No increased density. Consider special improvement district to protect Flathead Lake

Property Description: Furlongs Orchard Lot 11,12,13,14

Current zoning: R-1

Owner: Day

Recommendation: No density increase

Property Description: Furlongs Orchard Lot 9,10

Current zoning: R-1

Owner: Delaney

Recommendation: No density increase

Property Description: 1388 Bigfork Stage Road

Current zoning: RC-1

Owner: Niewoehner

Recommendation: Change to R-1
No mobile homes
No Apartments
Single Family / Condo. Limit: 2 per acre

Property Description: 9312 Hwy. 35

Current zoning: R-1

Owner: Gorsuch

Recommendation: Remain R-1

Min. lot 1.5 acres
No extension of water and sewer
Special improvement district to protect Flathead Lake
Maintain forested areas

Property Description: 307 Chapman Hill Rd.
Current zoning: SAG 5
Owner: Coats
Recommendation: 1 acre parcel (SAG-5) surrounded by density (approx. 5/acre)
Rezone R-2

Property Description: 285 Chapman Hill Rd.
Current zoning: SAG-5
Owner: Clithero
Recommendation: Rezone RA-1

Property Description: 310 Monroe St.
Current zoning: CVR
Owner: Slack
Recommendation: CVR

Property Description: 145 Bay Drive
Current zoning: R-1
Owner: Haug
Recommendation: Remain R-1
Protect historic Bigfork
Preserve agricultural land

Property Description: Unspecified
Current zoning: SAG-10
Owner: Les Potts
Recommendation: Rezone SAG-5
(Property may stay in family)

Property Description: Hwy 83 (between United Tool & Martel Construction
Current zoning: SAG-5
Owner: Johnston
Recommendation: Commercial zoning to match surrounding properties

Property Description: 233 Coverdell Rd.
Current zoning: SAG-20 (?)
Owner: Proctors
Recommendation: Do not rezone to SAG-5
Maintain open space close to Bigfork

Property Description: Directly across road from Grizzly Jacks
Current zoning: SAG-5
Owner: Harlan Coverdell
Recommendation: Rezone to B-3

Property Description: Unspecified
Current zoning: SAG 10
Owner: James & Debbie Thompson
Recommendation: Remain SAG 10

Property Description: 7135 Hwy. 35
Current zoning: AG-20
Owner: Anderson
Recommendation: Retain AG-20

Property Description: 275 Coverdell Rd.
Current zoning: SAG-5
Owner: McMurren
Recommendation: R-1

Property Description: 675 Ferndale Dr.
Current zoning: unknown
Owner: Knoll
Recommendation: Expand Bigfork planning area to include LaBrandt / Lindsey Ln.

Property Description: 200 acres in sections 23 & 24
Current zoning: SAG-10
Owner: Darrow
Recommendation: Retain SAG-10 (owner will continue agricultural use)

Property Description: Sections 11 & 14
Current zoning: AG-40
Owner: Crossbow Corp.
Recommendation: Retain AG-40 (owner will continue agricultural use)

Property Description: 140 acres (unspecified location)
Current zoning: unspecified
Owner: Eslick
Recommendation: R-1

Property Description: 110 & 120 Conifer Lane
Current zoning: SAG-10
Owner: Guerrant (Guerano)
Recommendation: Retain SAG-10
Do not allow industrial use inconsistent with rural character of area

Property Description: 4747 Foothill Rd.

Current zoning: SAG-5

Owner: Gonzales

Recommendation: Retain SAG-5

Property Description: 215 Chapman Hill

Current zoning: SAG-5

Owner: Sagami & Brosten

Recommendation: Rezone to R-4

Property Description: Landmark Lane

Current zoning: AG-40

Owner: Matter

Recommendation: AG-20

Property Description: 220 Swan River Rd.

Current zoning: AG-10

Owner: Hanson

Recommendation: Retain AG-10

Property Description: Quarter Circle LA Ranch Sections 5,6,7 Bordering:

R-1 Ranch development

R-1 Hwy 35 housing

R-1 100 acres (Robbins)

Current zoning: Unspecified

Owner: Averill

Recommendation: 50 /50 mix of R-1 and SAG-5

Property Description: 220 Lake Hills Drive & 853 Electric Avenue

Current zoning: R-4

Owner: Barnes

Recommendation: R-4

Property Description: 193 and 168 Bay Drive in Bigfork

Current zoning: RA-1

Owner: Witt Family Trust

Recommendation: RA-1

Property Description: 250 Bridge Street and 8525-8531 Highway 35 (same parcel)

Current zoning: B2

Owner: Witt Family Trust

Recommendation: B2 or CVR

Appendix C
Bigfork Water and Sewer

PRELIMINARY IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE FOR PHASES 1 AND 2

Article I.	<u>Task Description</u>	Phase 1	Phase 2
1.	Draft PER	April 2006	April 2008 ²
2.	Submit TSEP Grant Application	May 2006	May 2008 ³
3.	Submit SRF Loan Application and pursue additional funding through STAG and WRDA	At any time	At any time
4.	Preliminary Notice of Grant/Loan Award	Oct. 2006	Oct. 2008
5.	Completion of Final Plans and Specifications	May 2007	May 2009
6.	Advertise and Receive Bids for Construction	June 2007	June 2009
7.	Award Construction Contract	July 2007	July 2009
8.	Begin Construction	August 2007	August 2009
9.	Complete Construction	May 2008	May 2011
10.	One Year Certification	May 2009	May 2012
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The schedule shown is based on a single project that is funded by a TSEP grant and a SRF Loan. This schedule is driven by the TSEP funding process which is not adaptable to an early start on the project. 2. Update to 2006 PER, if necessary. 3. Pursue STAG and WRDA grants as well 			

R:\3835\001\02\Design

Docs\PER\Final

Draft\Bigforkcondition.summary.doc

Appendix D Public Input

1. Steering Committee Organizational Meetings:

Open to public-Notices provided by news media/posters
(Attendance documented by sign-in sheets)

September 8, 2004-7 present
September 14, 2004-13 present
September 23, 2004-15 present
September 28, 2004-18 present
October 5, 2004-19 present
October 12, 2004-15 present
October 19, 2004-18 present

Election of Officers:

Chair, Doug Averill
Vice-Chair, Denise Lang
Treasurer-Shelley Gonzales
At Large-Elna Darrow
At Large-Katie Brown

2. Develop/Produce Survey

October 26, 2004-24 present
November 2, 2004-21 present
November 9, 2004-11 present
November 16, 2004-16 present
November 23, 2004-17 present
November 30, 204-11 present
December 2, 2004-BLUAC
(Adopted Steering Committee as a sub-committee)
December 7, 2004-14 present
Sue Hanson elected Secretary
December 30, 2004-9 present
December 30, 2004-BLUAC

Minutes of meetings posted in Library

January 6, 2005-14 present
January 13, 2005-14 present
January 20, 2005-16 present
January 27, 2005-5 present
January 27, 2005-BLUAC
February 4, 2005-13 present
February 10, 2005-15 present
February 17, 2005-18 present
February 24, 2005-24 present
February 24, 2005-BLUAC
March 3, 2005-18 present
March 10, 2005-19 present
March 17, 2005-13 present
March 24, 2005-20 present
March 31, 2005-19 present
March 31, 2005-BLUAC
April 1, 2005-35 present
(Mail Survey)
April 4, 2005-BLUAC
Special Meeting
April 7, 2005-16 present
April 14, 2005-11 present
April 21, 2005-20 present
April 28, 2005-30 present
April 28, 2005-BLUAC
May 5, 2005-19 present
May 12, 2005-19 present
May 19, 2005-13 present (begin survey tally)
May 26, 2005-25 present

May 26, 2005-BLUAC
June 1, 2005-22 present
June 2, 2005-29 present
June 8, 2005-20 present
June 9, 2005-21 present
June 15, 2005-12 present
June 16, 2005-28 present
June 22, 2005-20 present
June 23, 2005-15 present
June 29, 2005-17 present
June 30, 2005-24 present
June 30, 2005-BLUAC
July 7, 2005-6 present (begin data entry)
July 14, 2005-12 present
July 21, 2005-10 present
July 28, 2005-9 present
July 28, 2005-BLUAC

Print Survey Results

3. Public Meetings-Survey Results Power Point

Presentations (August/Sept):

Bigfork Steering Committee
Bigfork Rotary
Woods Bay Sewer & Water District
Flathead County-Jeff Harris
Flathead County-Commissioners
Lake County-Commissioners
Eagle Bend Homeowners Assoc.
Harbor Village Homeowners Assoc.
Northshore Homeowners Assoc.
Bigfork High School Government Class
BLUAC

August 4, 2005-8 present
August 11, 2005-7 present
August 18, 2005-9 present
August 25, 2005-15 present
August 25, 2005-BLUAC
September 1, 2005-29 present
September 8, 2005-23 present
September 15, 2005-18 present
September 22, 2005-16 present
September 29, 2005-18 present
September 29, 2005-BLUAC
October 6, 2005-17 present
Flyers Distributed throughout Community

Public Meeting-October 11, 2005
High School Gym- 109 attending
Press Release: Bigfork Eagle, Daily Interlake & Lakeshore Country Journal
Letters of Invitation: Flathead Co. Commissioners, Flathead Co. Planning Board, Flathead Co. Planning Director Harris, Bigfork Chamber of Commerce, Bigfork Water & Sewer District, Bigfork Fire & Ambulance, Flathead County Long Range Task Force.
October 13, 2005-23 present
October 20, 2005-29 present

October 27, 2005-21 present

Election of Officers:

Chair: Don Loranger
Vice Chair: Buz Meyer
Treasurer: Shelley Gonzales
Secretary: Sue Hanson
At Large: Elna Darrow
At Large: Doug Averill
(Website Established)
October 27, 2005-BLUAC
November 3, 2005-20 present
November 10, 2005-33 present
(Workshop-Incorporation)
November 17, 2005-23 present
December 1, 2005-19 present
December 1, 2005-BLUAC

Public Meeting-December 7, 2005 Swan River Hall-25 present
December 8, 2005-11 present
December 15, 2005-15 present
December 29, 2005-BLUAC
January 5, 2007-37 present
January 12, 2006-19 present
January 19, 2006-29 present
January 26, 2006-30 present
January 26, 2006-BLUAC
February 2, 2006-17 present
February 2, 2006-BLUAC
Special Meeting
February 9, 2006-22 present
February 16, 2006-18 present
February 23, 2006-20 present
March 2, 2006-20 present
March 9, 2006-24 present
March 16, 2006-18 present
Public Meeting-March 16, 2006
Bigfork Middle School-30 present
March 23, 2006-BLUAC
March 30, 2006-27 present
Public Meeting-March 30, 2006
Bigfork Middle School-32 present
April 6, 2006-20 present
April 13, 2006-18 present
April 20, 2006-18 present
April 27, 2006-19 present
April 27, 2006-BLUAC
May 2, 2006 BLUAC ELECTIONS
John Bourquin, Chair
Phil Hanson, Vice-Chair
Darrel Coverdell-At Large
Shelley Gonzales
Paul Guerrant
Mary Jo Naive
Clarice Ryan
May 4, 2006-26 present
May 11, 2006-21 present
May 18, 2006-16 present
May 25, 2006-14 present
May 25, 2006 BLUAC
June 15, 2006 BLUAC
Special Meeting
June 29, 2006 BLUAC
July 27, 2006 BLUAC
August 31, 2006 BLUAC
September 14, 2006-24 present
September 21, 2006-19 present

September 28, 2006-21 present
 September 28, 2006-BLUAC
 October 5, 2006-47 present
 October 5, 2006-BLUAC
 October 12, 2006-31 present
 October 19, 2006-32 present
 October 26, 2006-23 present
 October 26, 2006-BLUAC-24 present
 November 2, 2006-29 present
 November 2, 2006-BLUAC (Workshop)-11 present
 November 8, 2006-BLUAC (Workshop)-19 present
 November 9, 2006-18 present
 November 14, 2006-BLUAC (Workshop)-18 present
 November 16, 2006-25 present
 November 21, 2006-BLUAC (Workshop)-15 present
 November 30, 2006-14 present
 November 30, 2006-BLUAC-25 present
 December 1, 2006-BLUAC (Workshop)-12 present
 December 7, 2006- BLUAC (Workshop)-10 present
 December 7, 2006-17 present
 December 13, 2006-BLUAC (Workshop)-12 present
 December 14, 2006-15 present
 December 28, 2006-9 present
 December 28, 2006-BLUAC
 January 16, 2007-BLUAC (Workshop)-12 present
 January 25, 2007 BLUAC-26 present
 February 15, 2007-10 present
 March7, 2007-31 present
Adopt Draft
 March 8 2007-BLUAC
Review Grieve Changes
 September 13, 2007-26 present
Review Grieve Changes
 September 27, 2007-17 present
Review Grieve Changes
 October 4, 2007 – 26 present
Review Grieve Changes
 October 11, 2007-20 present
Election of Officers
 Chair: Craig Wagner
 Vice-Chair: Elna Darrow
 Treasurer: Charles Gough
 Secretary: Pat Wagner
 At Large: Paul Rana
 At Large: Bruce Solberg
 Past Chair: Don Loranger
Review Grieve Changes
 October 18 2007-18 present
Review Grieve Changes
 December 5, 2007-14 present
Adopt BNP Amended Draft
 December 13, 2007-18 present
Adopt BNP Amended Draft
 December 27, 2007-BLUAC
 February 7, 2008 BSC (Land Use Map Workshop)-45 present
 February 14, 2008-BSC/BLUAC (Land Use Map Workshop)
 April 9, 2008-BSC presents Plan to Planning Board
 June 18, 2008-BSC/BLUAC (Workshop)-review Planning Board comments
 June 25, 2008-BSC/BLUAC/Planning Board (Workshop)
 December 11, 2008-BSC/BLUAC/Planning Board (Workshop)
 January 5, 2009-BSC/BLUAC-approve all changes to Plan

Steering Committee Needs Your Help

New Bigfork Area Land Use Plan

The Bigfork Land Use Steering Committee was recently reconvened to update the Bigfork Area Master Plan. To serve the process, the Committee will administer a public survey to determine the desires of Bigfork residents with regard to area land use. The Committee will use the survey information to implement and update the Master Plan.

The Committee was originally formed in 1993 and conducted a similar survey of residents. The current area land use Master Plan was created from the '93 survey results.

**Please
Help**

We need community assistance in the form of donations to defray survey and research expense. If you support our action we would appreciate your help. We also want your input. We meet weekly with subcommittees meeting more often.

Make checks payable to: **Bigfork Land Use Steering Committee**
c/o Flathead Bank, Box 308, Bigfork, MT 59911

Thank you, Bigfork!

Steering Committee meets with new planning director

Posted: Thursday, Sep 01, 2005 - 03:25:02 pm PDT

By RUSS MILLER
Bigfork Eagle

After hearing a presentation in Kalispell from Bigfork Steering Committee members regarding the results of a community survey, Flathead County Planning Director Jeff Harris called the effort "awesome" and "impressive." For two hours on Aug. 26, steering committee members and Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee members presented the survey and their work over the past months to gather information county officials can use when they create a new county growth policy.

How and when to use this information, however, mostly remains unanswered.

"I'm throwing out a caution," Harris told the group of 10 seated around a conference table in the Earl Bennett Building's second-floor conference room.

"You are light years ahead of the county, but we don't want to get too far ahead of the county."

The county, he added, is working on a new growth policy that the commissioners have to adopt by Oct. 1, 2006. Whether the Bigfork survey and resulting neighborhood plans are considered before or after that adoption is yet to be answered, he added.

The growth policy will provide generalized guidelines, a "framework" for managing the county's growth, Harris said. Specifics will be handled later.

John Bourquin, a BLUAC and steering committee member, tried to pin Harris down by asking whether local plans and recommendations could be "more restrictive" or "less restrictive" than what the county's new growth policy would spell out.

Harris said he had no good answer to the question, but tried to clarify the county's position by saying that local plans and recommendations could likely be no more or less strict than what the county's rules will offer.

"They have to be compliant and consistent with the growth policy," Harris said before trying to pull an example out of the air he described as hypothetical. For example, he offered, if the county said a gravel pit couldn't be within 500 yards of a school, then any local rule could not supersede that requirement.

There's still a lot of work to be done in Bigfork, steering committee Chairman Doug Averill told Harris and BJ Grieve, a county planner attending the presentation.

Steering committee members are presenting survey results during public meetings and are set to hold two or three larger public meetings in September where everyone in the Bigfork zoning area will provide input and discuss where and how they would like to see their neighborhoods develop in the coming years.

"We are not saying don't move forward but we must make sure that what takes place is in line with what we are doing," Harris later responded. And he agreed with the audience that the steering committee's meetings are the same type of meetings the county would plan with Bigfork residents to discuss local planning issues.

Steering Committee member Don Loranger, who was involved in the statistical compilation of the survey results, presented Harris and Grieve with a PowerPoint presentation presently being shown to select community groups. Loranger explained how the results the survey uncovered relayed the feelings and expectations of Bigfork land owners and survey respondents. Afterward, Loranger summed up the survey as demonstrating that "people are willing to change but not willing to destroy the reasons they moved here in the first place."

They want Bigfork to retain a small town atmosphere, according to the survey results.

Harris and Grieve added that most people in the county think their neighborhoods should be protected from rapid development. They added that they will be conducting meetings across the county in the coming months to discuss the concerns and desires of residents.

The Bigfork meetings, they added, fit into the process of public input county officials are seeking. The steering committee, in essence, Harris commented, is already doing some of the legwork county officials were expecting to do in Bigfork.

"We want a lot of public involvement," Harris said about putting the new growth policy together. A draft is expected in June or July of 2006, after county officials "go to all the communities" to gather input.

"It doesn't sound like we have to go far for Bigfork," Harris added, referring to the public meetings the steering committee and BLUAC have in mind for this fall.

Bigfork Survey Results Are Available

Last Thursday I attended the regular meeting of the Bigfork Steering Committee. It was an interesting and informative meeting, but my primary reason for attending was to see a copy of the survey results. Many people have been asking when the survey results would be available and I am happy to say that you can find a copy of the survey results at the Bigfork Public Library.

There are many hours of work in the documents that serve as the survey results. The answers are displayed in colored charts both bar charts and pie charts, as well as being in written form. Along with the results, there is a methodology that explains how the survey was developed, presented to the community, and tabulated. The level of professionalism in this document is very impressive and it is clear that members of the steering committee have worked very hard to produce a valuable and comprehensive report that should serve as the guideline for future development in the Bigfork area.

The fact that so many good people were willing to expend so much time and energy on this survey should give everyone in Bigfork a sense of pride and accomplishment. People in our community care about the future and value what we currently have. These volunteers want to make sure that we protect the fundamental values that have helped to make Bigfork what it is and they want to make sure that it continues to be what the citizens want it to be in the future.

Despite all this effort, there is uncertainty as to whether this document will actually be used by the county planners. Since Bigfork is an unincorporated village, the document can only be presented to the county as a neighborhood plan. The recently passed legislation that mandates that all county governments develop or update their Master Plans by October 6, 2006, states that neighborhood plans "may" be used as a guide for developing zoning within their neighborhoods. While the legislation is loaded with "musts," neighborhood plans are a much weaker "may," a situation that makes it possible for county planners

to completely disregard any neighborhood plan that doesn't coincide with the goals and guidelines developed in the Master Plan.

While it is apparent that the general results of this survey will, more than likely, fit with the general guidelines of any Master Plan developed by the county planners, the particulars and detailed directives of the survey may be ignored completely. At a meeting with the county planners where the survey results were presented, the reaction was to reiterate their position that the future plan for the county would be developed based upon recommendations received by citizens during public meetings.

As a result, the Steering Committee is looking at possible new directions to take. In the meantime, the basic recommendation that I would make is that everyone who is interested go to the library and check out the survey results. Then, armed with this information, they should attend as many public planning meetings as possible and let their opinions be known, as well as constantly referring to the survey as a reflection of the community's opinion.

In the end, what we want and what we get in the way of planning will be the result of our involvement in the planning process. The Steering Committee has done a fantastic job of giving all of us a feel for what our neighbors are thinking; now it is clear that we need to take this information and use it to drive home the points it makes to the county planners.

There will be opportunities to purchase your own copy of the survey in the near future and there is also the likelihood that a web site will be built so that the complete results and reports will be available to anyone at anytime of the day or night.

Once again, a group of dedicated volunteers has stepped up to help define and defend what we all hold dear about this community. Congratulations to all the members of the steering committee. Regardless of what happens, this was a job well done and I know that your effort will not be in vain.

Executive Summary of the 2005 Bigfork Survey

Bigfork area residents resolutely favor preservation of the charm and character of the local environment and view community planning/zoning by an elected local body as an essential step in that process. Respondents were unequivocally supportive of maintaining Bigfork as a safe, secure community with a rural, small-town environment. Capitalizing on the natural beauty of the area was also rated very highly.

It is important to note that the survey results cannot be characterized as anti-growth. Rather, respondents seemed to understand that growth is inevitable, and this growth would need to serve the needs of a diverse group of citizens. The imperative was to plan for it and do so in a manner that protects for all of us, those well-documented characteristics that make Bigfork the wonderful place that it is. Thus, based on the survey, planned and responsible growth consistent with Bigfork's character is the unequivocal message of Bigfork area citizens.

Specific Survey Results

Asked to rate the importance of a variety of community characteristics on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest), small town environment, rural/county environment, safety/security and natural/wildlife were all strongly supported in the 3.5 range. New housing, economic development and retail shopping received the lowest scores; 76.6% chose small town, rural, natural, and wildlife as the most important features of greater Bigfork.

When asked to rate their satisfaction with the availability of various housing types, all housing types received at least a midrange score. Responses indicated a modest level of support for additional housing in the areas of assisted living, senior housing, affordable rentals and affordable owner-occupied housing.

Story by Jim Jackson

Scenic beauty, sports fields and broadly based recreational activities received the strongest support while more narrowly defined areas such as aquatic and equestrian centers or an ice rink received only neutral support.

When asked about development needs, there was encouragement for small specialty shops, restaurants, home businesses, grocery stores and child care facilities.

With regard to the current planning and zoning processes and systems, respondents expressed overwhelming support (91.1%) for having members of the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee elected to office instead of the current method of appointment by the Flathead County Commissioners.

Responses in Section IV lead to the conclusion that when confronting growth issues, survey participants feel that maintaining the pastoral atmosphere of Bigfork and the surrounding area are imperatives of significant importance. However, the results do not really indicate an indictment of growth and economic development. Rather, the blend of responses points to support for growth as long as it does not unduly impinge on the overriding greater good of maintaining the essential character of the area.

Transportation was deemed adequate and future development should include efforts to maintain the rural/country atmosphere of the community. Bike paths should be incorporated into future road building projects.

Due to space constraints, I can't include more answers to survey questions. I highly recommend that you go to the library and read this document for yourself. My guess is that there won't be any surprises for readers but there are several clear mandates that most everyone can agree with.

Once again, thanks to the volunteers who made this happen. We are grateful for your efforts.

PUBLIC MEETING

FUTURE PLANNING FOR THE BIGFORK AREA!

The public is invited to a presentation
of the Bigfork Survey results on:

October 11, 2005

7:00 PM

Bigfork Elementary School Gymnasium

The results of the April 2005 survey will be presented,
as well as maps detailing the Bigfork Land Use Area.
Bigfork is in the process of updating the current plan to meet the
Montana Legislature's mandate for a Growth Plan.

Neighborhood plans, such as Bigfork's,
will be changed to comply with
Flathead County's overall Growth Plan.

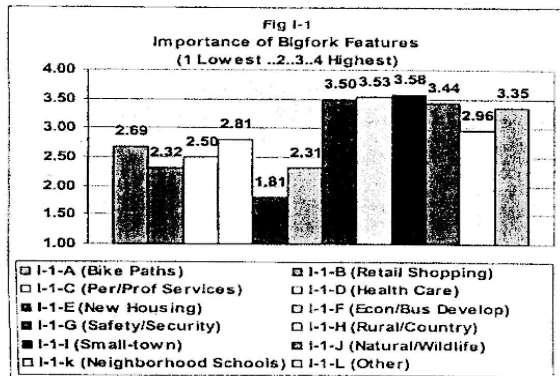
**Your participation and input is important
in the planning process
and for the future of Bigfork.**

Bigfork Steering Committee

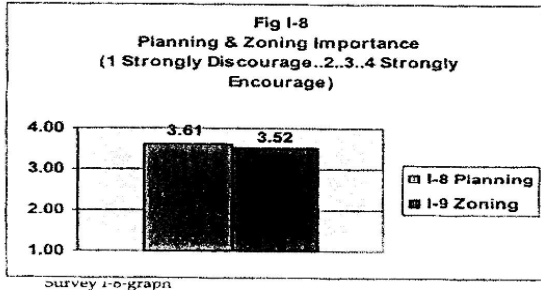
Bigfork Steering Committee Survey Results & Thank You

After many months of concentrated volunteer effort, the survey results are now available, along with comments from those who took the survey. The complete Survey Methodology and Results are available for sale at Electric Avenue Books, The Bigfork Chamber of Commerce or The Jug Tree. The price is set at \$15.00 for a bound copy with color charts and full comments. There will also be a copy available for review at the Bigfork Public Library. In addition, the minutes of all the Steering Committee meetings and the regular meetings of the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee are also available for review at the library. The Steering Committee is in need of donations so that they may continue the good work they have been doing. The donations are tax deductible. Checks should be made payable to The Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork, formerly known as the BDC, with a notation that they are earmarked for the Steering Committee. Checks can be mailed to Shelley Conzales, 4747 Foothills Road, Bigfork, MT 59911. Arrangements are being made for a public presentation using Power Point in the Bigfork High School gym. Watch this paper and or the Daily Interlake for the dates of the presentation.

Below are some of the survey results in chart and written form.



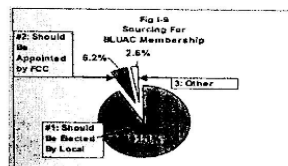
Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of a variety of community characteristics on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest). As shown, Small Town Environment, Rural/Country Environment, Safety/Security, and Natural/Wildlife were all strongly supported in the 3.5 range. New housing, Economic Development and Retail Shopping received the lowest scores. Consistent with these results, when asked to choose the two most important features from the list, 76.6 percent of respondents cited Small Town Environment, Rural/Country Environment, Natural Environment/Wildlife Habitat, and Safety/Security as the most important features of greater Bigfork. Personal/Professional Services (1.1%), New Housing (2.1%) and Retail Shopping (2.2%) received the lowest scores in this area.



Questions 8 & 9 in Section I of the survey stated "Community planning is an essential step to ensure a positive future for Bigfork", and "Community zoning is an essential step to ensure a positive future for Bigfork." As is clear from the graph, respondents expressed very positive support for the notion that planning and zoning are essential steps in ensuring a positive future for Bigfork. It is noteworthy that the response (3.61) to the question received the highest score of all questions asked in the survey.

Once Again We Would Like Thank Everyone Who Participated In This Important Community Activity and Especially Those Who Volunteered Their Time, Energy and Money So That This Document Could Be Created and Presented to The Flathead County Planners and Commissioners.

Paid Advertisement



Survey 1-9-graph

Question 10 in Section I of the survey stated "The Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee (BLUAC) advises the Flathead County Planning Board and the Flathead County Commissioners. The members should be: Elected by Bigfork voters or Appointed by the Flathead County Commissioners, or Other". This response represents respondents' views on defined aspects of the existing zoning and planning process. Consistent with the historical precedent of the Boston Tea Party and the more recent 1993 Bigfork Master Plan, respondents expressed overwhelming support, 91.1%, for having members of the Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee (BLUAC) elected to office instead of the current method of appointment by the Flathead County Commissioners. The figure is up considerably from the 1993 survey result of seventy-one percent favoring elected BLUAC members. Additionally, 65% of respondents felt that BLUAC members should have three-year terms with 26% supporting six-year term limits.

Clarice Ryan
Kelly Johns Sagami
Jean Saubert
Katie Rose Shawcroft
John Slezak
Marilyn Slezak
Jacob Schonau-Taylor
Brett Thuma
Don B. Torgerson
Ann Tucker
Cyrus Varnum
Jane Varnum
Carol Venable
Craig Wagner
Pat Wagner
Jill Watkins
Tedrowe Watkins
Dick Wilson

Our sincere apologies if we have left anyone off this list.

Special Thanks Volunteers: Bigfork Steering Committee Survey Development & Tally Process

John Agnew
Doug Averill
Kevin Barrows
Bigfork Chamber of Commerce
Edd Blackler
John Bourquin
Joe Breneman
Katie Brown
Justin Cail
Julie Cassette
Courtney Coneh
Gilbert Couts
Joan Cummings
Elma Darrow
George Darrow
Maggie Doherty
Josephine Fasolino
Steve Felt
Bev Fisher
Stan Fisher
Flathead Lake Lodge Employees
Charlotte French
Jesse Gonzales
Shelley Gonzales
Doris Gorsuch
Martha Groenke
Ann Guerrant
Paul Guerrant
Liz Hansen
Jim Hansen
Phil Hanson
Sue Hanson
Bob Hoene
Marge Hoene
Scott Horne
Nancy Idler
Jim Jackson
Carole James
Bob Kimball
Lakeshore Country Journal
Denise Lang
John Lang
Peter Leander
Jane Lieve
Don Loranger
Janet Loranger
Pat McBride
Perry McChill
Mike Mershon
Buz Meyer
Carole Meyer
Chris Moritz
Woody Nedom
Ramona Niewoehner
Cory Ostrom
Bruce Peachy
Collene Peachy
Dan Purcell
Cheryl Ridderhoff
Gary Ridderhoff
John Righetti
Sande Rogers
Noele Rudolph

continued in column on left

By RUSS MILLER
Bigfork Eagle (Sep 29, 2005)

After having presented community survey results to a select few local groups and county officials, Bigfork Steering Committee members last week planned their first meeting to present survey results to the general public. The meeting is important, according to steering committee members, as it will give everyone in Bigfork a look at what their neighbors are thinking when it comes to present and future land use issues. It will be an eye-opener for many, according to Doug Averill, steering committee chairman. Many people are unaware that their neighbors may have plans for property development that could take the community by surprise. And that's one of the purposes of the public meeting set for 7 p.m., Oct. 11 in the Bigfork Elementary School gym. Steering committee members will discuss the findings of the survey nearly 70 volunteers have spent months working on, giving residents a broad look at what the future of Bigfork could be as well as learn about things they can do now to protect or promote their own interests. Steering committee members will present survey results and maps related to the Bigfork Land Use Area during the meeting. The public is invited to attend the meeting along with county officials who are expected to help answer any questions. In the early 1990s similar meetings took place that led to developing land use plans for Bigfork that local and county planning officials have generally followed over the years. But now with the county's growth policy set to be rewritten, county and local officials say it is time to revisit the issues surrounding land use and property development. Similar meetings a decade ago generated a lot of discussion among neighbors and a direction for Bigfork's future, Averill explained in recent weekly steering committee meetings. The meetings this fall should be no different and very possibly could even be critical. County planning department officials hope to attend the meetings and promised steering committee members over the past few weeks that these public meetings will be essential in getting feedback from the community that will be used in rewriting Flathead County's growth policy. Meetings like these will be taking place throughout the county in the coming months. Bigfork's meetings are not only the first in the county but are likely the only ones being coordinated by local people. Steering committee members also will be selling copies of survey results at several locations in Bigfork. At the BDC Auction Sept. 15, \$2,500 was raised to offset the cost of conducting the survey by selling survey result booklets. For more information on the public meetings to present and discuss the Bigfork Steering Committee's community survey and how it interacts with the county's new growth policies, call steering committee secretary.

By RUSS MILLER
Bigfork Eagle (Oct 20, 2005)

More than a hundred people showed up for the first public presentation of the Bigfork Steering Committee's survey results—a number organizers said was a good turnout. The meeting Oct. 11 in the Bigfork Elementary School gym detailed highlights of the community survey conducted this past spring. About a third of the people at the meeting indicated that they were either members of the steering committee or had attended a past meeting. Most of them also participated during the survey process. The meeting also attracted county planning director Jeff Harris, Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee members Clarice Ryan and Phil Hanson, county planning board chairman Don Hines, county board of adjustment member Gina Klempel, and county Long Range Planning Task Force members Jerry Nix and Undersheriff Mike Meehan. There were also members of the local fire department and Quick Response Unit crews, Bigfork Water and Sewer District, and others from area organizations, on hand to listen to the presentation. The public meeting was the first in the Flathead Valley to discuss planning and zoning issues in preparation for Bigfork's land use plans, to be considered for Flathead County's growth policy. Although the steering committee's survey and meetings also include the Woods Bay and Swan Lake neighborhoods—many of those residents pay taxes to Flathead County schools, for example—Lake County also is working on its own growth policy update. All Montana counties have to update their growth policies by October 2006. Last week's meeting lasted about 90 minutes, and only a few had any questions to offer steering committee members. At issue, however, is when and whether Bigfork's land use plans will be accepted by county officials. Harris, as he has said in previous meetings, pointed out that as long as Bigfork's plan is consistent with the “umbrella” of the county's growth policy, there shouldn't be an issue with what locals are recommending. The issue of self-government came up, along with how county officials will handle the request from some that BLUAC members be elected instead of appointed by county commissioners—an idea survey respondents overwhelmingly support. Steering committee members are continuing to meet weekly at noon on Thursdays to plan for Bigfork's contributions to the county's updated growth policy, however, they are trying out new locations.

On Oct. 20, they will have their annual election of new officers at La Provence. On Oct. 27, they will meet at the Launch at Marina Cay.

Last Thursday, members heard from past secretary of state, state representative, state senator, gubernatorial candidate, and Bigfork High School teacher Bob Brown.

Brown discussed some of the avenues available in establishing self-governance for Bigfork.

Bigfork could request a special zoning district, or pursue township status, for example.

By RUSS MILLER

Bigfork Eagle (Nov 3, 2005)

An expert on municipal incorporation will be presenting a workshop next week to discuss the pros and cons of a self-governing Bigfork.

Bigfork Steering Committee members have invited Dr. Ken Weaver, senior research associate at Montana State University's Local Government Center, to speak at noon, Nov. 10. The meeting at Flathead Lake Lodge is expected to take two to four hours.

"We'll be discussing the advantages and disadvantages of municipal incorporation for Bigfork," Weaver said Friday.

"We will talk about the process of incorporation, how it works, and how it gets to the ballot if people want to vote to incorporate, he said.

"We neither speak for or against incorporation", Weaver added. "We are not here to say it is a good idea or a bad idea. We are presenting this talk just so that Bigfork will be a better informed community."

Weaver will be coming from Bozeman to make the presentation with Judy Mathre, associate director of the Local Government Center. The pair have given other presentations like this one including one for the Lakeside Community Council last February.

Bigfork Steering Committee members plan to invite representatives from Evergreen and Lakeside to attend the presentation. The meeting is free and open to the public.

"This is going to be a very informative meeting," said Sue Hanson, steering committee secretary.

Weaver is the Local Government Center's past director and a retired professor of political science specializing in local government. Weaver has also served as Political Science Department chairman and has more than 45 years of public service experience in federal, state and local government. He's a former Bozeman mayor and Bozeman City Commissioner, and a past editor of the Montana Policy Review.

Weaver authored numerous publications dealing with local government, most recently co-authoring with Judy Mathre a text on Montana's Local Government Review. He is presently writing a new text on Montana local government to be published this winter.

Mathre is responsible for the conduct of all local government education programs conducted by the Center. Since 1985, Mathre has organized and conducted scores of seminars, workshops and professional certification schools for Montana's local government officials.

Thousands of mayors, council members, municipal clerks-treasurers, county commissioners and other elected county officials have participated in the Local Government Center's education and professional certification programs.

Mathre is a former member of the Bozeman City Commission and has served as the mayor of Bozeman. She has authored a number of research monographs dealing with local government fiscal issues, and she researches and publishes the annual Montana Municipal Profiles and Montana County Profiles.

By RUSS MILLER

Bigfork Eagle (Feb 14, 2006)

An expert on municipal incorporation will be presenting a workshop next week to discuss the pros and cons of a self-governing Bigfork.

Bigfork Steering Committee members have invited Dr. Ken Weaver, senior research associate at Montana State University's Local Government Center, to speak at noon, Nov. 10. The meeting at Flathead Lake Lodge is expected to take two to four hours.

"We'll be discussing the advantages and disadvantages of municipal incorporation for Bigfork," Weaver said Friday.

"We will talk about the process of incorporation, how it works, and how it gets to the ballot if people want to vote to incorporate, he said.

"We neither speak for or against incorporation", Weaver added. "We are not here to say it is a good idea or a bad idea. We are presenting this talk just so that Bigfork will be a better informed community."

Weaver will be coming from Bozeman to make the presentation with Judy Mathre, associate director of the Local Government Center. The pair have given other presentations like this one including one for the Lakeside Community Council last February.

Bigfork Steering Committee members plan to invite representatives from Evergreen and Lakeside to attend the presentation. The meeting is free and open to the public.

"This is going to be a very informative meeting," said Sue Hanson, steering committee secretary.

Weaver is the Local Government Center's past director and a retired professor of political science specializing in local government. Weaver has also served as Political Science Department chairman and has more than 45 years of public

service experience in federal, state and local government. He's a former Bozeman mayor and Bozeman City Commissioner, and a past editor of the Montana Policy Review.

Weaver authored numerous publications dealing with local government, most recently co-authoring with Judy Mathre a text on Montana's Local Government Review. He is presently writing a new text on Montana local government to be published this winter.

Mathre is responsible for the conduct of all local government education programs conducted by the Center. Since 1985, Mathre has organized and conducted scores of seminars, workshops and professional certification schools for Montana's local government officials.

Thousands of mayors, council members, municipal clerks-treasurers, county commissioners and other elected county officials have participated in the Local Government Center's education and professional certification programs.

Mathre is a former member of the Bozeman City Commission and has served as the mayor of Bozeman. She has authored a number of research monographs dealing with local government fiscal issues, and she researches and publishes the annual Montana Municipal Profiles and Montana County Profiles.

By CHRIS FRIAR

Bigfork Eagle

If you want a say in how your property is zoned in the future, the time to get involved is now. This is the reoccurring theme of the Bigfork Steering Committee particularly at last Thursday night's meeting at the Bigfork Middle School gym. More than 20 people attended to locate their property on the county map and give their opinion of how their property should be zoned in the future. Those who wish to have some sort of say in the growth of the community are highly encouraged to attend these meetings. The Committee was formed to gather community input for the Flathead County Growth Master Plan due Oct. 1, 2006. Since Bigfork is not incorporated, the portion of Bigfork and community input must be presented to county commissioners to include in the county plan.

A survey was sent out last year to 6,000 residents and the committee received a 25 percent response rate. Survey results indicated citizens wanted planned and responsible growth consistent with Bigfork's character. The survey covered the areas of Flathead County School District 38 and 4 (Bigfork Schools) and Lake County School Districts 385 and 73. Lake County school districts were included as these property owners pay taxes to Bigfork schools and their children attend the school.

"The original steering committee started in 1991 and it took two years to get together the plan in 1993 and the plan had to be updated every 10 years," said treasurer Shelley Gonzales. "Things went smoothly and then there was a boom in town so the committee had to be reorganized because Montana law legislates we have to have a growth plan by 2006."

Resident Al Johnson who recently became involved in the committee brought up the importance of community involvement at the meeting and kept driving the focus of the meeting on the one thing that would make a difference: community involvement.

"People are impassioned about the rapid growth that is going on here," Johnson said. "And for a lot of people those changes aren't very good. If the area changes so much that you can't afford to live here or can't be here anymore because it's not the place you moved to then it becomes serious."

There are seven areas of concern for future growth in the Bigfork community these are: natural resources, affordable housing, public facilities, local services, land uses, population growth and economy. These areas are all outlined in the survey which can be viewed in its entirety at www.bigforksteering.org.

One main concern is affordable housing for Bigfork's aging population. In the survey there was strong support for Senior and Assisted living facilities, but little support for mobile/manufactured homes, subsidized housing and multifamily apartments. Economically the survey showed that residents were in favor of small shops, restaurants, home businesses, grocery stores and child care facilities.

"If the population trend is more retirees and not all can afford the housing, we need to see what should be done about housing in the future and currently," Gonzales said. Community issues need to be addressed. We have to take a look at the demographics and look at the population and the needs."

The Web site has the latest update on meeting minutes, contact information and announcements. Meeting minutes are updated every week. Announcements are frequently posted. Gonzales said there are several committees working on various projects and everyone is welcome to participate in any subcommittee they choose.

The Bigfork Steering Committee meets every Thursday, noon, at the Bethany Lutheran Church. Everyone is welcome to attend and participate at these meetings.

Steering committee hears neighboring planning strategy

Posted: Thursday, Mar 16, 2006 - 09:04:24 am PST

By JOHN MUELLER

Bigfork Eagle

The Bigfork Steering Committee welcomed Dennis Hatton of the Somers Townsite Association at its March 9 meeting. Hatton shared aspects of Somers' neighborhood planning process with BSC members. Somers, like Bigfork, is revising its neighborhood plan in order to better prepare for imminent residential and commercial growth.

Hatton confirmed that Somers is growing and development plans are moving forward on the approved Cooper Farms property, which will hold 800 housing units. Hatton said Super One and Glacier Bank have expressed commercial interests in property across Highway 93, which would serve important service needs. Hatton said Somers is planning for 2,000 new residences in the next 10 years, and the Lakeside Water and Sewer District is currently seeking 3,000 new sewer hook-ups. Somers currently has a population of 250 and its schools are at capacity.

BSC member Edd Blackler inquired about Somers' efforts to avoid Highway 93 frontage from evolving into a connected corridor of strip malls from Lakeshore to Kalispell.

Hatton did not have an immediate response to how Somers will avoid that possibility.

"We like to promulgate the idea that Montana is this beautiful place to come to, but we haven't taken great care that the site that visitors see is pleasant," Blackler said, referring to sprawled growth. Blackler added that he hopes the BSC can make proper suggestions to the county commissioners to address that issue.

Blackler also noted that a 1992 planning analysis predicted that developers would target future Flathead Valley development towards unzoned areas. Blackler said this prediction appears to be coming true.

Hatton's presence at the BSC meeting was representative of a visionary planning philosophy mentioned by BSC member, Doug Averill, which sparked lengthy discussion among members. That philosophy calls for long-term, wide-scale planning on a regional level through cooperative relationships with neighboring villages and cities.

"The whole concept of neighborhood is being abandoned," Averill said, referring to contemporary development practices in America. Averill said that current developments have only a 20-year lifespan, after which time their lack of a sense of community and compatibility results in a lack of pride, deterioration of homes, loss of volunteerism and even crime.

Averill owns 2,000 acres immediately south of Bigfork upon which a 200-acre development has been proposed.

Steering Committee Chairman Don Loranger announced that Professor Jack Stanford, director of the Flathead Lake Biological Station, is tentatively scheduled to speak at the March 23 steering committee meeting. Stanford will discuss potential environmental impacts of lakeside development.

Shelley Gonzalez, steering committee treasurer and subcommittee coordinator, requested draft reports from the seven subcommittees by March 31.

The steering committee formed seven subcommittees to address critical issues affecting Bigfork as part of its revision of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan. The seven

subcommittees will address population and economics, downtown and commercial districts, housing, public facilities, local and social services, land use, natural resources and the environment.